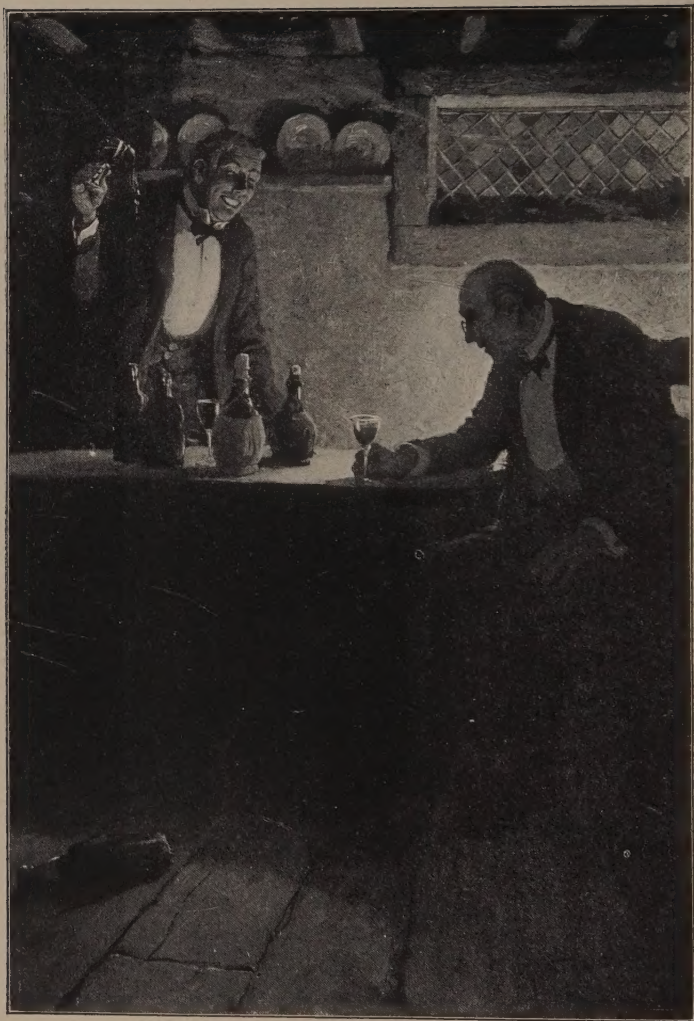


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AS SOON AS BOIVIN HAD TAKEN HIS SECOND GLASS OF WINE,
PATISSOT UNDERSTOOD WHY HIS WIFE SERVED HIM
PINK WATER.

Inclusive Edition

THE COMPLETE WORKS
OF

Guy de Maupassant

THE INHERITANCE
THE SUNDAYS OF A PARISIAN
and other stories

Translations, Critical and Interpretative
Essays by

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INTRODUCTION

BY F. C. DE SUMICHRAST

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Y common consent Maupassant has been given first rank among the writers of the naturalistic school. More completely than any other he fulfils the conditions laid down by the apostles of that creed: he is as nearly impersonal as it is possible for a man of marked characteristics to be; he is a close and accurate observer of the subjects he selects for study and reproduction; he excludes the play of imagination and the flight of fancy; he avoids the poetic—albeit he trained himself to verse-writing—both because he is essentially far removed from being a poet and because poetry tempts to modification and transformation of the thing seen. He has no ideal, least of all any spiritual ideal; consequently he has

no aspirations; he is frankly and entirely of the earth, earthy; his love of nature is not what is generally understood by that term: it is removed from the love of nature exhibited by Wordsworth and other poets and prose-writers in England, from that which distinguishes Chateaubriand, Lamartine and Victor Hugo in France. Nature, to Maupassant, is primitiveness, in other words unrestricted liberty. The fields and woods, the distant prospects, the vast expanses of the sea, do not speak to him of greater, purer and nobler things, do not suggest to him higher thoughts. They are fair, impressive, strange, physically restful or stimulating, but the contemplation of them never leads him upward. In his novels, in his tales, he very faithfully portrays the external aspects of nature, but there he stops short, inevitably, since he is solely a materialist.

A materialist in the very fullest sense of the word. Every one of his tales, every one of his novels, conclusively proves this. The literary perfection of his work is undeniable, and fortunate is it for his readers that this is the case. It is this perfection which warrants admiration for the man: what he has done he has done thoroughly well. The literary critic derives real satisfaction from the literary, the artistic excellence of the work; he recognizes gladly and proclaims willingly the acuteness of observation and the vigor of reproduction. The ordinary reader is captivated by the dramatic force of many of the incidents, by the startling nature of many of the motives, by the cool directness of expression. But, in the case of those who read superficially, the effect is profoundly depressing, as must invariably be the case with unalloyed materialism.

Even a cursory reading of Maupassant's works

will cause the following points to be noticed, aside from that extraordinary power of style already referred to: Maupassant abhors man individually and yet more collectively; he despises and loathes his fellow-creatures; he is sick unto death of the crushing monotony of life; there is nothing in life, nothing worth having or desiring outside of bodily, material enjoyments; he detests religion and all that pertains to it; the notion of God evokes naught but execration and imprecation from him; his hatred of and contempt for mankind, for society, induces in him a detestation of social relations and inspires an intense desire to be rid of all memories, all remembrances; he is filled by an overmastering dread of death which, he feels, will forever end the one and only thing he clings to: satisfaction of the senses.

These are characteristic traits in Maupassant, and while he shares some of them with other writers of the school, in no one of the more prominent are they so highly developed as in him. His great master, the man who made Maupassant the literary artist he is—Gustave Flaubert—is not invariably depressing; Emile Zola, foul, bestial and materialistic though he customarily is, rises at times to cleaner heights and stirs other than base thoughts; Alphonse Daudet, with his infinite sadness, scarcely ever fails to let a beam of his Provence sunshine break through the shadow; but Maupassant is inflexibly and unchangingly the abhorrer of man.

The reasons for this are not far to seek: his parentage, his early upbringing, his conception and practice of life once he emerged from parental and pedagogical control, the effect of his surroundings and the ideas prevailing in the France of his day throw light upon his character and the nature of his work.

The influences which act upon society and fashion it necessarily make themselves felt on the individuals composing that society. The France into which Henri-René-Albert-Guy de Maupassant was born, on August 5, 1850, was a France that had been convulsed by a succession of revolutions, the first and greatest of which had struck at the very roots of the spiritual life of the people; a France that had been intoxicated for years with military triumphs and that had, by sheer weight of brute force, directed by genius, lorded it over continental Europe; that had, by logical process, been driven into a clerical and monarchical reaction which, in its turn, was replaced by a *bourgeois* rule satisfying no one and incapable of controlling the hostile factions seeking its destruction.

Maupassant's youth and early manhood coincided with the period of the Second Empire, a time when material prosperity blinded men to the corruption and relaxation of morality that followed in its train. Swift enriching of a nation, as of an individual, almost certainly involves moral deterioration. It was the case with France under the third Napoleon: luxury and extravagance completed the work begun by the "philosophers" and skeptics of the eighteenth century. The old traditions were scorned; the new principles had not yet taken firm root or borne, consequently, any good fruit. Personal immorality streamed in the wake of public dishonesty; honor in man and virtue in woman were alike discounted; religion became largely superficial; the family bond was loosened; the marriage tie, never lightly thought of among the upper class, sat more lightly yet.

The parents of Maupassant unhappily exhibited to the boy a painful disunion, due to the father's

moral failings, which speedily ended in a separation. It was by his mother that Guy and his younger brother Hervé were brought up.

Children observe far more keenly than adults are apt to realize, and draw conclusions from their observations. Maupassant, naturally endowed, like Alphonse Daudet, with a remarkable gift of observation, noted, reflected, and early despised. It was an unfortunate introduction to life, destined to tell upon the writer's point of view in after years. Under such conditions and with such a lad, it was not to be expected that either religion or morality would appeal strongly to him; in point of fact they repelled him, and his antagonism grew instead of diminishing as time went on.

His temperament contributed its share to making him a mere materialist. Strongly built, very vigorous, overflowing with life and energy, passionate, sensual, Maupassant quickly entered on the path of sensual gratification, and early went to excess along that road. Time and again Flaubert warned him seriously and plainly but to no purpose. An athlete, Maupassant overtaxed his bodily powers; a materialist and sensualist, he sapped his intellectual faculties, and, after an unsuccessful attempt at suicide, ended his days in a mad-house.

The influences which acted upon him at the outset of his literary career were not such as to form an effective check to his materialistic tendencies. His great teacher was Flaubert, a man whose example, on the whole, might advantageously have been followed by his pupil, and whose maxims, had Maupassant taken them to heart and applied them, would have delayed and perhaps even prevented the lamentable ending of the brilliant young writer's career. Flaubert held very tenaciously to the belief

that the man who desires to observe and know life accurately, in its widest and in its most detailed aspects, and who seeks to reproduce reality in his books, must keep himself apart from the whirl of life and pleasure.

But Flaubert, along with this wholesome view, was also an earnest devotee of the doctrine of the irresponsibility of art, of art for art's sake. It is a doctrine which has much to recommend it—to a certain class of artists—but it is likewise a most dangerous doctrine in that it severs art from life and morality, and grants to its disciples a freedom from responsibility for their actions which is wholly incompatible with the sound principles of society and social intercourse. Such a doctrine would naturally be acceptable to an ardent sensualist and materialist of the stamp of Maupassant, falling in, as it did, with his own tendency to total disregard of the ordinary beliefs of men. So, in his choice of subjects as in his language, he more than once startled and even shocked case-hardened followers of the doctrine.

How difficult it must have been to startle them may be inferred from the composition of the literary circle in which Maupassant gained his first notable success as a tale-writer. It was that familiarly known as "Zola's tail," formed in 1876. Among the members of it were Paul Alexis, who played the part of Boswell to Zola's Johnson, and whose mind, according to the ingenuous confession of Maupassant himself, was especially foul; Ceard, Huysmans, who later "experienced religion," Margueritte, who has since won a high place as a novelist. It was the time when Zola trespassed beyond all bounds in the filthiness and repulsiveness of his novels, then admired and lauded by the "tail,"

which, none the less, revolted and separated from him when he brought out *la Terre*. Such a circle was not, it will readily be seen, of a nature to free Maupassant of his haunting, close-clinging sensuality, or to inspire him with nobler and loftier motives in his literary work.

There is still another point to be considered in this connection: the essential opposition between the Gallic and the Anglo-Saxon mind, the Gallic and the Anglo-Saxon point of view. The Frenchman justifies his license by referring it to the *esprit gaulois*, a convenient cloak for nastiness and filth as well as a sound explanation of true wit; and he absolutely refuses to believe in the Anglo-Saxon preference for cleanliness and morality, proclaiming it to be mere "British cant." Taking this fact in connection with the other forces at work, with the greater looseness of morals—already too loose—due in part to the succession of political and social convulsions which had afflicted and still afflict France, the peculiar tendencies of Maupassant become more intelligible even if no less unpleasant.

By way of compensation, Maupassant has the qualities of his defects, and the amazing force, vividness and truthfulness of his work are largely due to the causes enumerated above. They are not the only causes, but they are important factors.

To begin with, his very materialism, gross as it often is, stood him in good stead when he set about reproducing life as he saw it. The idealist necessarily selects and modifies as well as invents; he has in mind a certain purpose outside of and beyond the reproduction of the scene or character he has chosen. Chateaubriand, in his *Atala*, strove to impress on his readers the power and beauty of the Roman Catholic creed; Victor Hugo in *les Misérables* willed

to flagellate society and to extol the individual. These two great writers, and all those who like them are idealists, consciously or unconsciously bend events to the support of their ideal, modify characters to make them conform to that ideal. Chateaubriand's Chactas is as impossible as Victor Hugo's Jean Valjean; the author knows it, the reader knows it, but the reader also knows that the characters are subordinated to a purpose and accepts the impossibility as tranquilly as a mathematician accepts a postulate.

But Maupassant is entirely free from any such pre-occupation as visibly affects the idealist. He has no object to attain save the accurate reflection, the exact reproduction of life as he sees it. He sees man coarse, foul, sensual; woman unchaste and deceitful, and he simply so paints man and woman. He has no desire to apply any formula, to prove any theory; he merely tells what he beholds, and tells it in direct, incisive language. Maupassant is not and never was a theorist like Emile Zola, who wrote volumes to expound and justify his conception of the novel; consequently Maupassant is truer in his reproduction of life than is Zola. He is called a naturalistic writer and is included among the members of that school, but that is not because he enrolled himself among them or adopted and practised their principles, but because critics and public alike always wish a writer to be labeled and easily recognizable as forming one of a group or a class. Maupassant did not abide by any æsthetic formula; he disliked formulas; he wished to be as free from trammels as a writer as he was free from them as an individual. No imperious necessity, therefore, compelled him to modify his scenes or his characters so that they should fit into a set scheme. He simply

transported them from the reality around him into his books.

The rigid naturalistic rule required that a writer should describe such people only as he had rubbed elbows with, had known personally or studied directly. This Maupassant did without an effort and without a thought of rule; he had no other method of work, nor did it occur to him to seek any other, and herein lies one of the causes of the intense reality in his stories. The share of imagination, of invention in them is exceedingly slight. Every one of his novels is the recapitulation and outcome of a part of his own life and of the lives of the people with whom he came in contact, and the same is true of every one of his tales. He has no need to invent: his observations and his experiences furnish him with ample material. His youth spent in Normandy, among the fishermen, the sailors, the farmers, the peasants, the sportsmen, the shopkeepers, the middle class, upper and lower, proved later a rich treasure house of knowledge from which he draws at will. His experiences during the war, when he served in the ranks, provided him with dramatic incidents utilized later with telling effect, and one of which is the *motif* of the tale that first brought him into notice: *Boule-de-suif*. His life in Paris as an *employé*, first in the Ministry of Marine and later in the Ministry of Public Instruction, his excursions on the Seine, especially between Asnières and Maisons-Laffitte, gave birth to at least one novel and many a harrowing or many an amusing or scandalous tale. He traveled in Brittany, he dwelt for a space in Auvergne, he visited Corsica, rambled through Italy, made a dash into Sicily, wandered in Algeria and Tunisia, and even ran across to England; and everywhere, on the somber shores and the misty *landes* of Brittany, in

the gorges of Auvergne, under the Italian skies or on the torrid sands of Africa, he saw, noted, remembered, and afterward wrote the novels and tales which have made him famous.

Mouche is the living reproduction of his weekends on the river, and every one of the personages in the tale are well-known and were recognized at once; *Bel-Ami* is the tale of his journalistic experiences and the picture of the Paris he was then frequenting; *Une Vie* paints the Norman society he knew intimately, as *Un Héritage* depicts the departmental offices in which he spent some years, as *Mont-Oriol* is the story of days in Auvergne. His tales, especially those of which the scene is laid in Normandy, were so startlingly true to life and the actors in them so accurately—and unblushingly—described that more than once indignant protests assailed Maupassant, who, possibly, welcomed them as tributes to his accuracy. The sickening incident in *En mer* is one that he either beheld in person or had related to him as the boat came in; *le Baptême*, *la Roche aux Guillemots*, *Pierrot*, *Un réveillon*, and how many more, are drawn from life; fancy, imagination, invention have no part in them.

But how was it Fortune so favored Maupassant that incidents, at once so numerous, so varied, so startling and yet often so commonplace, thus came in his way, crowded upon him? He has told us the secret himself in the preface to *Pierre et Jean*—in some respects his best novel—in which he describes his training under Bouilhet first and Flaubert next. For Maupassant underwent a long and thorough training in his art, and if he attained perfection as a stylist, it was not without long and hard labor. Louis Bouilhet, the poet, had been, with Flaubert, the childhood's friend of Maupassant's mother and

her brother, himself a gifted man. Bouilhet it was who directed the early literary attempts of the lad. He taught his young follower that quality and not quantity was to be aimed at steadily, and along with quality, originality, and that these results could be attained only by persistent work and a thorough knowledge of the art of writing. Then came Flaubert, and during a period of seven years Maupassant wrote and Flaubert criticized. The value of that training to the young aspirant after success cannot be overestimated, for Flaubert was a consummate artist, painstaking, accurate, and strikingly original. To him life was but to be the handmaid of art, and to art he sacrificed everything. Most conscientious in laying a solid foundation for his scenes and characters, he required the same care on the part of his pupil.

“ For seven years,” says Maupassant, “ I wrote verse, tales, even a wretched drama. Naught of all this work has survived. The Master read every word, then on the following Sunday, during luncheon, he criticized at length and drove into my mind, little by little, two or three principles which sum up his long and patient teaching. ‘ If a man possesses any originality,’ he would say, ‘ he must first and foremost bring it out; if he has none, he must acquire it. Talent is sustained patience. One must look at whatever one desires to express long enough and attentively enough to discover some aspect of it which no one has yet seen or described. In everything there is a proportion of unknown, because we are accustomed to use our eyes only with the remembrance of what others before us have thought about what we are looking at. The minutest thing contains something yet unknown. Let us find it. In order to describe a blazing fire or a tree standing in a plain

we must remain in front of that fire and that tree until, so far as we are concerned, they no longer resemble any other tree or any other fire. In that way does a man become an original writer.' "

Thus Maupassant learned first to *see*, actually to see, not merely fancy he saw, but penetrating whatever he studied and drawing from it something not previously indicated. In this way the simplest incidents, suggesting nothing to the average man and making but a fleeting impression upon him, afforded him material for tales of intense dramatic power, and commonplace events subjects of situations startling in their suddenness and their unexpectedness. A good instance of this is the grim *la Ficelle*, simple enough but infinitely vigorous.

Next Flaubert taught Maupassant the importance of searching for the one and only word that accurately expresses the idea sought to be conveyed, and this does not mean the accumulation of so complex and superabundantly rich a vocabulary as that of Victor Hugo or of Théophile Gautier, but the plain word that speaks as no other word can speak. And in Maupassant's work it is noteworthy that the language is invariably direct and unmistakable. He learned his lesson thoroughly; his style is as near perfection, probably, as it is possible for a literary style to be.

Further, Maupassant, although classed among the naturalistic writers, never subscribed to or practiced the doctrine of abundant detail, for to him art was not mechanical photography of a subject, but selection of the telling, vital details and traits that would cause the reader to see as the author saw. No greater difference can exist than the practice in this respect of Balzac, the head of the realists, and Zola, the chief of the naturalists, on the one hand,

and Mérimée and Maupassant on the other. Both the latter are sparing of words, yet they produce their effects as surely and as vigorously as either of the others and with infinitely less fatigue to the reader. Maupassant's object, and this also he learned from Flaubert, was not to reproduce everything he saw, but the essential points, those plainly and everlastingly true. It is the characteristic and the distinctive that he seeks and reproduces, not the insignificant, hence the directness and power of his stories. They go, each and all of them, straight to the point; told in simple, forceful language, they leave us in no doubt as to the character or the occurrence. The people live, the things exist. It is no mere play of fancy, no skill of invention, but fact that stares us in the face when we read Maupassant. He unquestionably imparts the fullest, the most thorough illusion of the truth with its logical sequence of events, and that was what he steadily sought to do.

Maupassant has been termed one of the most impersonal of writers, if not absolutely the most impersonal, Mérimée among tale-writers and Leconte de Lisle among poets being the only others who are placed in that category. He unquestionably is impersonal, so far as it is possible for a man of strong and marked character to be so. Impersonality must necessarily and always be relative. Between men like Rousseau, Chateaubriand and Victor Hugo, who fill their works with their dominating personality, and men like Leconte de Lisle, Mérimée and Maupassant, who seek to eliminate themselves and to let their work speak for itself, there are many and varied grades of subjectivity and impersonality. But it is true of Maupassant that he has been nearly completely successful in most of his tales in

this respect. He does stand aside and lets the story unfold itself, without even desiring to point a moral. That, indeed, is the farthest from his purpose, first because he is no believer in morality, conventional or other, secondly, because it is contrary to his view of reality. If the reader chooses to draw conclusions from what he has been told, that is his affair, but the author will not lift a finger, will not utter a word to direct him. The *fact*, that is all he is concerned with.

Yet, as no man can completely abstract his personality from his work, Maupassant has left an impress of his character and tendencies on his literary productions. The choice of many of his subjects speaks eloquently of his preferences; the reflections he puts in the mouths of some of his characters or in his own, for he addresses his reader directly at times, indicate his prepossessions and reveal his detestations. It has been pointed out that even a cursory perusal of the tales compels the conclusion that Maupassant was a misanthrope of the most rabid type, a hater of society and a reviler of God. Thus does his personality make its mark. As he is no believer in any form or system of morality, he has no hesitation in being what men rightly term immoral; his conception of love between the sexes is immeasurably removed from what it is conventionally supposed and intended to be, what it is actually in so very many cases; to him love is simply sensual satisfaction. As he despises man and society, he makes not the slightest effort to veil the loathsome and repulsive in man.

But again these defects in him produce results which, from the purely literary and artistic point of view, are remarkable and admirable. His vision is lucid and penetrating, consequently his reproduc-

tion is accurate; his indifference makes him impartial, consequently true, and thus comes about that amazing fidelity to reality which is his chief title to the rank he occupies among writers. Fiction ceases to be fiction with him; the reader is unconsciously convinced of the truth of what he is reading; he recognizes in many cases—it may be hoped not in all—how vivid is the reproduction.

Maupassant being untrammelled by any form of doctrine, as by any form of morality, by any æsthetic theory as by any belief in ideals, could and did look at reality with a vision practically undisturbed. As he had no didactic purpose, not even so much as shows in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, he leaves his characters to speak for themselves and does not even take the pains of directing the reader's attention to such and such a trait; he neither condemns nor approves their actions, their words, their motives. What these motives are he does not attempt to analyze; they must be judged by the reader himself who is a witness of the acts they cause. He is utterly indifferent to the opinion the reader may entertain on his subjects, his personages or himself. He has seen an incident, he has studied a circle of society and reproduced it in a tale or a novel: there his connection with it ends. He is not responsible for it: the thing *is*, that suffices for him. As it *is*, he has the right to reproduce it. What its effect for good or evil may be on others is a matter of profound unconcern to him. He is utterly irresponsible to God or man.

But why did Maupassant never depict virtue in his tales? Why has he not given the world of readers a single story of pure love and simple happiness and content? The question is almost an idle one. It is because he understood none of these things and cared

for none of them. He was incapable of comprehending pure love; the thing had no existence for him; any instance of it that might have been brought to his notice he would have soiled with a caustic, cynical, unbelieving remark. Virtue he did not believe in, and assuredly he would not look for it in the class of women he frequented. Apart from this, virtue failed to interest him in not being dramatic, in not presenting literary and artistic possibilities, wherein he was totally in error and short-sighted in the extreme. Simple happiness and content were alien to his nature as he developed it, a nature which ever sought, from the moment he thought for himself, the fulness of excitement and the maddest of satisfactions. In *Sur l'eau*, he has himself described his conception of life: it is purely physical and sensual. He could not understand any other form of life or of happiness.

It is but a partial view of life, therefore, that is met with in his work; so far as he has examined life he has reproduced it with extraordinary felicity and fidelity, but it is very far from being life in its fullness and diversity. Maupassant is entitled to the praise of having done what he has done thoroughly well, but likewise to the blame of having deliberately confined himself to a comparatively small fraction of the world around him, and that fraction usually not the most pure, the most useful, the most ennobling. The ultimate effect of his work is to depress and discourage, not to inspire and strengthen, and why this is so needs no further elucidation. A materialist, he has given a materialistic representation of the people and incidents he has observed. It is perfect of its kind, but the kind itself is far from approaching the best. He remains and will remain a master of style, a master of the art of tale-writing.

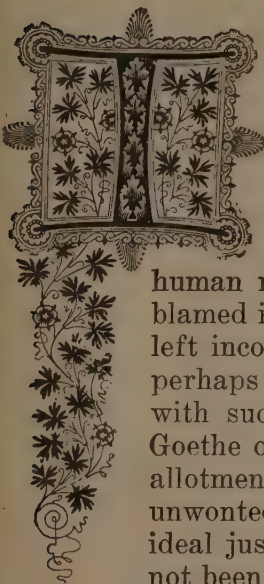
but never, under any conceivable circumstances, will he attain the highest rank. The value of his work lies in its astonishing faithfulness of reproduction of reality, but more is required to make any work great. And it is precisely that which is wanting in his.



A CRITICAL AND INTERPRETATIVE ESSAY

BY ADOLPHE COHN

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It is a common failing among critics and literary historians to base their judgments of writers upon the idea that they have said all they had to say, that their writings contain views in themselves complete of society or of the

human mind and that they may be justly blamed if some part of the picture has been left incomplete. Such a system, legitimate perhaps to a certain extent when dealing with such writers as Hugo, or Tennyson, Goethe or Voltaire, with whom fate, in the allotment of years for work, has dealt with unwonted generosity, falls very short from ideal justice when the writers studied have not been allowed to run the whole course of their life expectation, when, while in the full exercise of their productive powers they have been struck by the almighty hand of Death, like Molière or, like Maupassant, by a disease to which death itself must

have been preferable. In trying to form an estimate of Maupassant's works, to draw from the mass of his writings his conception of society, or of literary art, this must not be forgotten, that he began to write for the public at the age of thirty and that he was hardly forty-one when the mental illness which was to result in bodily enfeeblement and two years later in death fell upon him with the swiftness of the thunderbolt, leaving only a parched and shrivelled skeleton in the place of the luxuriant and generous foliage of a magnificent offspring of the forest of nature.

Only eleven years! And in that short period one volume of verse, two comedies, six one-volume novels and more than twenty volumes of short stories! And in this whole body of production not one work, nay, not one line that seems to have been hurriedly written or that betrays haste and looseness in composition. This, in short, is Maupassant's record and it would be enough to stamp him as one of the most extraordinary writers of his time or of all times.

It is impossible to speak of Maupassant without mentioning Flaubert's influence over him. It was something more than influence. Maupassant was not simply a disciple, but literally a pupil of Flaubert. For a period of about ten years the younger man kept on writing without publishing, simply because the pages covered by him had not been approved by the illustrious author of *Madame Bovary*, of whom he was at that time a constant companion. Both Flaubert and Maupassant were from Normandy, and when the latter came to Paris, a seeker after literary fame, he quite naturally turned for advice and inspiration to the great man from his province. A more exacting critic it would have been

impossible for him to find. On two literary sins Flaubert was absolutely inexorable; an inharmonious sentence, or the use of a word that might have a meaning slightly different from that which the author intended to convey to the mind of the reader. Only when his young friend's French seemed to him to be flowing harmoniously and unmistakably lucid and descriptive did Flaubert say to him: "Go ahead!" And not until Flaubert uttered the words did Maupassant dare to step out of the small coterie of writers from which he had received friendly applause and to submit his productions to the judgment of the general public.

Another influence, somewhat different in form, though not antagonistic, to that of Flaubert, was at that time working upon Maupassant—the influence of Zola, well known already, but not at the height of his fame. It is in a small volume containing a number of stories, each one by a different author, gathered under general title of *Soirées de Médan* ("Evenings at Médan"), Médan being Zola's country place, that Maupassant made his literary *début*. Zola himself had contributed to the volume a notable story, *l'Attaque du Moulin*, since then dramatized and turned into an opera libretto. But in spite of the success of the Zola contribution, it is not too much to say that the most striking composition in the volume was the story published over the hitherto unknown signature of Guy de Maupassant and under the strange title of *Boule de Suif* ("tallow-ball").

The immediate success of *Boule de Suif*, which instantaneously lifted the formerly unknown author to a position in the front rank of the writers of the time, was not entirely due to the literary merits of the story. It belongs to a class of writings in which France was quite naturally interested at the time of

its publication. Less than ten years had then elapsed since the close of the Franco-German war of 1870-71. This had not been a war waged outside of the frontier, the incidents of which were known only to the military element of the nation, but a war which had brought the victorious invader to the very heart of the country, in which fully one-third of the national territory had been occupied by the enemy, for a shorter or longer time, in some cases for as long as three years, as the last German soldier did not leave the French soil until the last penny of the tremendous war indemnity had been paid into the coffers of the victors. Few were those whose minds did not harbor some vivid recollections of incidents due to the long and enforced contact of the two nations. War is a curse; but it has this advantage that it removes for a while the fetters of that which men call civilization, a freedom that not only allows but even compels the animal man to show himself in his natural garb. Maupassant, on the outbreak of that war, had just reached the adult age. He had done his duty to his country, had seen a good deal of the war, had heard more about it; in short, he had his mind as full of war recollections as any man in his generation, and the French public was ready to listen to any story based upon such recollections, if but told with a moderate degree of cleverness.

Boule de Suif was that, and more than that. The subject was not drawn from the writer's imagination, like the subjects of Daudet's charming war stories, *l'Enfant Espion*, *Salvette et Bernandou*, *le Siège de Berlin*. The incident related by Maupassant had really occurred, at least in its main lines. A pupil of Flaubert, the great founder of the realistic school, it was but natural that in his determination to represent nothing but reality Maupassant

should have determined, at least at the start, to deal with nothing but real facts. This admirably fitted in with the temper of the public which he was addressing. France had had a surfeit of works of imagination. Even the novel, Zola exclaimed, must cease to be a work of fiction and must aim simply to become a document for the historian. The story had other elements of success. The part played in it by the conqueror is not exactly in keeping with the high professions of morality, by the help of which he had tried to have the victory of Germany over France accepted as a victory of virtue over lust. The story therefore was almost sure of being well received.

But all this would not have succeeded in giving it a permanent place in literature. Unless uncovering a real fund of human observation presented in terms closely adapted to the things represented, its success, like that of by far the larger part of the war literature of those times, would have been sure to be but ephemeral. Such was not the case. The story is as fresh to-day, nearly thirty years after its publication, as when it first appeared. It appeals to audiences far different from the French public of 1880 just as much as to its first readers. Even the Germans, when interested in the play and counterplay of human motives, cannot fail to realize its power. It has not a trace of chauvinism. It is not an attack against a class, but merely the record of individual doings, and of the amount of unpalatable truth that it contains quite as large a proportion falls upon one side as upon the other.

The fact is that all the qualities which have caused Maupassant to be acknowledged one of the greatest writers of short stories are already there. He had served a hard and long apprenticeship, but

he emerged from it a master. Whether it must be considered disparagement of him to say that he never wrote anything better than his first story, or, upon the reverse high praise to say that with his first step he reached the goal of perfection, we shall not attempt to decide. This, however, must be remembered, that we have of Maupassant practically only what he wrote between the ages of thirty and forty, a period which in the production of many a longer-lived writer presents a character of striking unity; that Maupassant was stricken when he was hardly past forty, that is, at an age when man, in spite of the dictum of some recent theorists, is still full of possibilities of development. If we will compare Maupassant with other writers, then, with the object of judging by his works of the quality of his mind, we must compare his production only with what they wrote between the ages of thirty and forty. To bring forward anything written at a more advanced age would make the comparisons unfair. Take Balzac, for instance, between 1830 and 1840, and you will find that in bulk, as well as in the variety of subjects treated, the thirty volumes of Maupassant not unfavorably compare with the stupendous production of the author of *La Comédie Humaine*. In breadth and strength of composition, to be sure, Balzac is immensely superior to the more recent writer. But is not this advantage at least as much as offset by the mastery of style which was the undisputed possession of Maupassant and to which Balzac cannot lay the slightest claim?

Boule de Suif, with its clearness and precision of style, with the admirable delineation of the various characters of the story, all drawn from the common people of the country and therefore easily recognizable by all, and also with the admirable simplicity

of the dialogue, made Maupassant famous in one day. The volume of verse, *Des Vers*, which he published soon after, did not add much to his reputation. It was read with pleasure, it showed skill in verse construction, strong naturalistic tendencies, but no one could shout that a great poet had been born again to France. Clearly prose was the best instrument for the author of *Boule de Suif*.

His first one volume novel, *Une Vie*, was awaited with a good deal of expectation, expectation which was not entirely disappointed. Although *Une Vie* betrays too clearly the great influence then exerted over Maupassant by Emile Zola, especially in the amazing swiftness with which the characters deteriorate, when read as a series of disconnected chapters, taking each incident by itself as a separate story, it is in every way a worthy sequel to *Boule de Suif* and it showed that the author was not hemmed in by any narrowness of observation, but was equally at ease, and equally convincing in the description of attitudes and reproduction of speech of all classes of society.

In this, as a whole, mainly consists the chief interest of the six novels written by Maupassant, although *Pierre et Jean* and *Bel-Ami* show a greater power of extended composition than any of the other ones and allow one to suppose that if the author had lived longer he might have made as great a name for himself as an author of romances as he has as an author of short stories.

As it is, Maupassant stands unrivaled at the head of the French writers who have handled the short story. First of all, leaving out one or two excursions into the domain of mystery, like *Le Horla*, Maupassant's are never impossible stories, and this for a good reason, viz.: that Maupassant made it a

point always to start from some real occurrence which had come to his knowledge; a curious similarity with the practice of another great Norman writer, the greatest writer given by Normandy to France, Pierre Corneille, who, after his *Cid*, never chose the subject of a tragedy anywhere but in history, for fear of presenting to the public impossible actions. Then his field of vision is extraordinarily wide, his observation astonishingly varied. His Parisian *boulevardier*, his provincial nobleman are as true to life as his artisan, his peasant girl, or his fisherman. After all, man is intensely interested in man, and you cannot take ten steps in any of Maupassant's stories without coming across some person whose gait, speech, manners are so natural that you feel like following him or her as long as you are not called away by some other and more important errand. Perhaps you may not learn very much about them, perhaps nothing more than their mood, happy boisterousness or unfathomable disgust at things in general, in an after-dinner walk, but this little something is a bit of human experience; no striking of attitudes about it, or, if there be, some clever warning of the author has put us on our guard and we see the ass or rather the monkey under the lion's skin.

To say that Maupassant has treated all sorts of subjects, has run through the whole gamut of human passions, would be an exaggeration. But here again we say: he might have done it, had he lived longer. As it is, we find that the world of ambition, ambition for power, is not represented in his works; the political comedy, which could have provided him with so many types and subjects, he has left almost untouched; and thus the picture of society which is presented by him is not as complete as that of Balzac, say, or Tolstoy. The passions which seem to

have had most interest for him, as those that stir man most to action, are love and cupidity. Every man, one might almost say, in Maupassant's stories, is after a woman or after money. And, *mutatis mutandis*, the same thing must be said of his women. This evidently is what he had observed in the short years which it was given him to live. A clear proof of the statement that he presented only what had been observed by him will be found in the number of war stories that are dotted here and there over the wide field of his love and money stories. If there had been no war in France during his lifetime there would have been no war stories in his works.

In spite of the frequent recurrence of the same themes, however, no two stories of Maupassant's are alike. His stories do not repeat themselves. Man changes from one moment to another, like the shapes of the clouds over our heads, and to watch these changing shapes was Maupassant's unceasing delight.

How Maupassant can have been called a pessimist passes our understanding. No one ever more fully, more deeply or boisterously according to the occasion, enjoyed the good things of life. Nature intoxicated him, he reveled in it as the beast which delves into a cool stream in the heat of a summer day. To be sure he saw the ugly side of things, and he would have been sorry not to see it, so long as it existed. But that he considered it a necessity in the plan of the universe does not seem an inference legitimately drawn from his work. Nay, did he think that there is any such thing as a plan of the universe? Is it not because he did not see clearly the connections that bind together all the atoms of the Infinite that he preferred to present disconnected bits of observation and to write short stories for the

beguilement of idle hours, rather than ponderous and pretentious long romances filled with characters presenting a unity which he did not discover in life? Who knows? What he says, anyhow, is clear. It is clear because of his admirable style. It is precise, sharply cut because of his astonishing command of easily understood words. Not one among the contemporary writers of France commands such a rich and at the same time such a simple and unpretentious vocabulary.

His fame has gone far beyond the boundaries of his native land. Tolstoy marvels at the depth of human interest he finds in his stories. And but yesterday, in his *Ecce Homo*, the eccentric German, Friedrich Nietzche, saluted him as "That great Latin."

Such praise is not undeserved. In an age full of make-believe Maupassant strove to be absolutely sincere, and he succeeded.





THE INHERITANCE

PART I



ALTHOUGH it was not yet ten o'clock, the clerks were pouring in through the building of the Ministry of Marine, hastening from all corners of Paris, for New Year's Day, the time for zeal and promotion, was approaching. The noise of hurried footsteps filled the vast building, which was pierced by countless doors giving entry to the different offices.

Each man entered his little den, shaking hands with those who had already arrived, took off his jacket, and put on his office coat; then he sat down at his desk, where the papers were piled high awaiting him. Then the clerks visited one another and told what news they knew. They first asked whether the manager was there, whether he appeared to be in good humor, whether the mail was large.

The order clerk for "general business," M.

César Cachelin, a former non-commissioned officer of marines, who had become head clerk through his length of service, was registering in a large book everything the ushers brought in. Opposite him the copying clerk, Old Man Savon, who was known throughout the whole ministry for his conjugal troubles, was slowly copying a message from the manager, his body bent, looking from the corner of his eye in the stiff position of an accurate copyist.

M. Cachelin, a fat man with short, straight white hair, was talking while accomplishing his daily task: "Thirty-two despatches from Toulon. We get as many from that port as we do from any other four put together." Then he asked Old Man Savon the question he asked him every morning: "Well, papa, how's the missus?"

The old man answered without interrupting his work: "Monsieur Cachelin, you know that this subject is very distasteful to me."

And the order clerk began to laugh, just as he laughed every day when he heard this same sentence.

The door opened and M. Maze entered. He was a dark, handsome fellow, who dressed with exaggerated elegance, and considered his physique and manners far above his station. He wore large rings, a heavy watch-chain, a monocle, for style, as he took it off to work, and he had a peculiar motion of his wrists in order to show his cuffs decorated with big china cuff-buttons.

As soon as he reached the door he asked: "Is there much work to-day?" M. Cachelin answered: "The most still comes from Toulon. It's easy to see that New Year's Day is approaching; they are very busy over there."

Another clerk, M. Pitolet, a joker and a witty fellow, appeared in turn and laughingly asked: "And do you think that we are not busy here?"

Then, drawing his watch, he declared: "Seven minutes to ten, and everybody here! And I'll wager that His Dignity Monsieur Lesable was here at nine o'clock, at the same time as our illustrious manager."

The order clerk stopped writing, put his pen behind his ear, and, leaning over the desk, said: "Oh, if that fellow doesn't succeed it won't be for not trying!"

M. Pitolet, sitting on the corner of the table and swinging his legs, answered: "But he will succeed, Papa Cachelin; you may be sure that he will succeed. I'll bet twenty francs to one sou that he will be manager inside of ten years!"

M. Maze, who was rolling a cigarette and warming his legs at the fire, exclaimed: "Bah! personally I should prefer to work for the rest of my life for twenty-four hundred francs rather than to kill myself the way he is doing."

Pitolet turned on his heel and answered in a mocking tone: "Nevertheless, my dear fellow, this day, the twentieth of December, you are here before ten o'clock!"

The other merely shrugged his shoulders indifferently, saying: "Of course, I have no desire for everybody to pass over my head! As long as you come here in time to see the sun rise I will do as much, although I deplore your haste. Between that and calling the manager 'dear master,' as does Lesable, and leaving at half-past six and taking work home with him, there is quite a distance. Be-

sides, I belong to society, and I have other obligations that take up my time."

M. Cachelin had stopped registering, and he was dreaming with his looks lost in the distance. Finally he asked: "Do you think that he will be promoted again this year?"

Pitolet answered: "I should say he would! He's not *cléver* for nothing."

Then conversation turned to the eternal topic of promotion and perquisites, which had been occupying this great hive of bureaucrats from the first floor up to the roof. Chances and figures were added up and balanced, and indignation was expressed over foreseen injustice. Discussions left off the day before were continued, and they would be taken up again the following day with the same reasoning, the same arguments, and the same words.

A new clerk entered, small, pale, ill-looking. It was M. Boissel, who lived as in a novel by Alexandre Dumas, Sr. Everything for him became an extraordinary adventure, and every morning he would relate to Pitolet strange things that had occurred to him the evening before, imaginary tragedies in his house, weird cries in the street, which had made him open his window at twenty minutes past three in the morning. Every day he had separated two men fighting, stopped runaway horses, saved women in danger, and, although he was deplorably weak, he would continually boast of the exploits which he had accomplished with the strength of his arms.

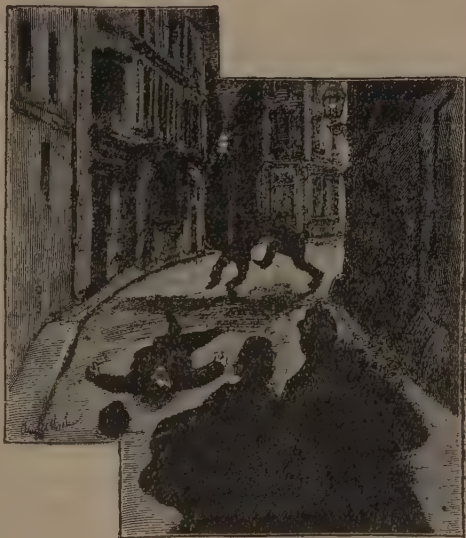
As soon as he understood that they were talking of Lesable, he exclaimed: "Ah! some day I'm going to tell that rascal what I think of him; and

if he gets promoted before I do I'll shake him up so that he'll never want to do so again!"

Maze, who was smoking, grinned, saying: "You would do well to begin to-day, for I have good information that you are to be set aside this year to give way to Lesable."

Boissel raised his hand, exclaiming: "I swear that if——"

The door once more opened, and a little man with side whiskers like a marine officer or a sailor, with a very high collar, who rattled off his words as if he never could find time to finish what he had to say, entered with a preoccupied air. He shook hands like a man whose time is not his own. Going up to the order clerk, he said: "My



dear Cachelin, will you give me the Chapelou file, Toulon, A. T. V. 1875?"

The clerk stood up and reached for a book above his head; from it he took a package wrapped up in a blue shirt and presented it, saying: "Here, Monsieur Lesable; I suppose you are aware that the manager has taken three despatches from this file."

"Yes, I have them, thank you."

The young man left again with a hurried step. He was hardly out of sight when Maze exclaimed: "What style! He looks as if he were already manager."

Pitolet replied: "Patience! patience! He will be before you are."

M. Cachelin had not resumed his writing. He looked as if something were worrying him. At last he exclaimed: "That fellow has a wonderful future!"

Maze murmured in a disdainful tone: "I suppose he has—for those who consider the ministry a career; for the others—it's not very much."

Pitolet interrupted him: "Perhaps you intend to become ambassador?"

The other made an impatient gesture: "As far as I am concerned, I don't care! But I maintain that the position of office manager will never amount to anything in the world."

Father Savon, the copying clerk, had not stopped working. But for the last few minutes he had dipped his pen in the ink several times in succession, and then persistently wiped it on the damp sponge, without being able to trace a single letter. The black liquid ran down along the metal point and fell in round blots on the paper. The old man, astonished and in despair, looked at the despatch he was copying, which he would have to do over again, as he had been forced to do so many others in the last few days; and he said in a low, sad voice: "There's some more adulterated ink!"

A burst of laughter followed this exclamation. Cachelin was shaking the table; Maze was bent in two as if he were about to enter the chimney back-

ward; Pitolet was stamping, coughing, waving his right hand around as if it were wet, and Boissel himself was choking, although he usually took things tragically rather than otherwise.

But Old Man Savon wiped his pen on the end of his coat and continued: "There is no cause for laughter. I am obliged to repeat my work two or three times."

He drew another sheet of paper from his portfolio, adjusted the carbon, and began: "Monsieur le Ministre and dear colleague. . . ." The pen now held the ink and clearly traced the letters. The old man took his pose again and continued copying.

The others had not stopped laughing. They were choking. This had been happening for the last six months, and the old man could never see the joke that they were playing on him. It consisted in pouring a few drops of oil on the damp sponge. The steel was thus covered with a greasy liquid and no longer held the ink; then the old clerk would spend hours in bemoaning his troubles, using up whole boxes of pens and bottles of ink; and at last he would declare that the office supplies were entirely too defective.

Then the joking was turned into a regular obsession and torture. Gunpowder was mixed in the old man's snuff, drugs were poured into the water of which he took a glass from time to time, and they made him believe that, since the Commune, the majority of materials in daily use had been thus adulterated by the socialists in order to harm the government and bring about a revolution.

As a result he had conceived a fierce hatred against anarchists, whom he believed to be am-

bushed everywhere, and he had a mysterious fear of some unknown and terrible person.

A bell rang sharply in the hall. This angry ring of the manager, M. Torchebeuf, was well known; and every one rushed for his own door in order to reach his compartment.

Cachelin began to register again, then he put his pen down and took his head in his hands in order to think.

He was ruminating over an idea which had been worrying him for some time. An old non-commissioned officer, retired after receiving three wounds, one in Senegal and two in Cochin China, and appointed to the ministry as an exceptional favor, he had been forced to endure many hardships, griefs, and miseries in his long career of subordinate; therefore he considered authority, official authority, as the finest thing in the world. An office manager seemed to him to be a superior being, living in a sphere of his own; and those clerks of whom he heard people say: "He is shrewd; he will advance quickly," seemed to him to belong to another race, to be of an entirely different nature from his own.

He therefore looked upon his colleague, Lesable, with a superior consideration which bordered upon veneration, and he harbored the secret and persistent desire of seeing him marry his daughter. She would be rich some day, very rich. This was known throughout the ministry, for his sister, Mademoiselle Cachelin, was worth a million, a whole, solid, intact million, acquired by love, it was said, but purified by devotion. The old maid had led a gay life and had retired with five hundred thousand francs, which she had more than doubled in eighteen years, thanks to a rigid economy and to tastes which

were more than frugal. She had been living for a long time with her brother, who was a widower with one child, a young girl, Coralie; but she contributed only a very little to the household expenses, hoarding and increasing her gold and continually repeating to Cachelin: "That makes no difference, since it's for your daughter; but marry her off quickly, because I wish to see grandnephews. It is she who will give me the joy of embracing a child of her own blood."

The thing was known throughout the administrative forces and there was no lack of suitors. It was even said that Maze himself, the handsome Maze, the pride of the office, was turning around Old Man Cachelin with a visible intention. But the old sergeant, a man who had traveled under many suns, wanted a man with a future, a man who would become a manager and who would reflect glory on him, César, the old non-com. Lesable was getting along wonderfully, and he had been trying for a long time to draw him to his house. Suddenly he straightened up, rubbing his hands. He had found a way.

He knew every one's weakness. Lesable could be captured only by professional vanity. He would go to him and ask him for protection, just as one goes to a senator or to a deputy, or to some other person of high rank.

As he had not had an increase of salary for twelve years, Cachelin considered himself pretty certain of obtaining one this year. He would therefore pretend to believe that he owed it to Lesable, and then in return he would invite him to dinner.

As soon as his plan was conceived he began to carry it out. He took off his office coat, drew on his

street jacket, and, taking all the registered material which belonged to his colleague's business, he hastened to the office which this clerk occupied by himself by special favor, as a reward for his diligent work.

The young man was writing at a large table on which lay open files, surrounded by papers numbered in red or blue ink. As soon as he saw the audit clerk enter, he asked, in a familiar tone, wherein a certain consideration could be noticed: "Well, my dear fellow, are you bringing me much luck?"

"Yes, quite a little. And then I would like to speak to you."

"Sit down, my friend; I am listening."

Cachelin sat down, coughed, looked worried, and exclaimed in a shaky voice: "Monsieur Lesable, this is what is bringing me. I will come straight to the point. I will be perfectly frank, as an old soldier should be. I have come to ask a small service of you."

"What is it?"

"To cut a long story short, I need an increase in salary this year. I have no one to protect me, and I thought of you."

Lesable blushed a little, surprised, pleased, full of vain confusion. Nevertheless, he answered: "But I am nobody here, my friend. I am much less than you, who will some time be head clerk. I can do nothing. Believe me——"

Cachelin interrupted him with a respectful brusqueness: "Tut, tut! The chief will listen to you, and if you will only say a word for me all will go well. Just think! I am entitled to my pension in eighteen months, and it will mean five hundred francs less if I get nothing on the first of

January. I know that every one says: 'Cachelin is well off; his sister is worth a million.' That many be so; my sister may have a million, and it grows, but I get none of it. It's for my daughter, that's true, but my daughter and I are two different persons. A deal of good it will do me to see my daughter and my son-in-law traveling around in a coach and four when I have nothing in my stomach. You understand the situation, don't you? "

Lesable immediately answered: "That's true, quite true—what you say. Your son-in-law may not be well disposed toward you. And, anyhow, one always feels more comfortable not to owe anything to any one. I have promised to do my best for you. I will speak to the manager and explain your case to him. You may count on me! "

Cachelin arose, took his colleague's hands, pressed and shook them in a military manner, mumbling: "Thank you, thank you! You may count on me if the occasion ever—if I can ever——" He did not finish, as he did not find any good ending for his sentence; and he walked away with the rhythmic tread of an old soldier. But in the distance he heard the angry ringing of a bell, and he began to run, for he had recognized it. It was the chief, M. Torchebeuf, who was ringing for his audit clerk.

A week later Cachelin found the following note in his mail:

"MY DEAR COLLEAGUE: I am pleased to announce to you that the Minister, on the recommendation of your director and our chief, yesterday signed your nomination as chief clerk. To-morrow you will receive the official notification. Until then you know nothing, do you?"

"Very respectfully yours,

"LESABLE."

César immediately ran to his young colleague's office, thanked him profusely, offered his eternal devotion, and overwhelmed him with gratitude.

On the following day it became known that MM. Lesable and Cachelin had both been promoted. All the other employees would have to wait for another year, and as compensation would receive a gratification which varied between five and three hundred francs.

M. Boissel declared that he would lie in wait for Lesable at the corner of his street at midnight some night, and give him such a thrashing that he never would forget it. The other clerks were silent.

The following Monday, as soon as Cachelin arrived, he went to his protector's office, entered solemnly, and said in a ceremonious tone: "I hope that you will do us the honor of dining with us during the Epiphany. You may set the date yourself."

The young man, a little surprised, raised his head and looked at his colleague; then he answered without turning his eyes away, in order better to read the other man's thoughts: "But, my friend, I—all my evenings are taken up for some time."

Cachelin insisted in a good-humored tone: "Oh, you wouldn't refuse us after the service which you have just rendered us. I beg of you for my own sake and that of my family not to refuse."

Lesable hesitated, perplexed. He had understood, but he did not know what to answer, as he had not had time to think the matter over and to weigh the pros and cons. At last he thought: "I

am not taking any risk by going to dinner;" and he accepted with a satisfied look, naming the following Saturday. He added, smiling: "So that I shall not have to get up too early the following day."

PART II

M. Cachelin lived in a little apartment on the fifth floor of a building at the upper end of the Rue Rochechouart. It had a balcony, from which one could see the whole of Paris; there were three bedrooms, one for his sister, one for his daughter, and one for himself; the dining-room was used also as a drawing-room. During the whole week he was busy making preparations for this dinner. The *menu* was discussed at great length in order to have a dinner that would be substantial and at the same time distinguished. The following dishes were decided upon: a consommé with eggs, relishes, shrimps, *saucissons*, lobster, a fine chicken, some canned peas, *pâté de foies gras*, a salad, ices, and dessert.

The *pâté* was bought from a neighboring delicatessen shop, with the recommendation to have it the best. It cost three francs fifty. As for the wine, Cachelin applied to the wine merchant of the corner, who supplied him with the red beverage with which he ordinarily quenched his thirst. He did not wish to go to some large establishment, giving the following reason: "The little retailers find few occasions to sell their good wines. For this reason they are kept very long in the cellar, and they become very fine."

He returned home early on Saturday to make

sure that everything was ready. His servant, who opened the door, was as red as a beet, for her oven, which had been lighted since noon for fear that she would not be ready, had roasted her face all day; emotion had also played its part.

He entered the dining-room in order to look over things. In the middle of a little room a round table made a white spot under the bright light of a lamp covered with a green shade. The four plates, covered by napkins folded like an archbishop's miter by Mademoiselle Cachelin, the aunt, were surrounded by knives and forks of white metal, and two glasses, one large and one small. César found this insufficient, and called: "Charlotte!"

A door to the left opened and a little old lady appeared. She was ten years older than her brother, and she had a narrow face framed by white hair which was made wavy by curl-papers. Her thin voice seemed too weak for her bent body, and she walked with a slightly dragging step and tired gestures.

When she was young they had said of her: "What a dainty little creature!"

She was now a thin old woman, very neat, as a result of her early training, headstrong, stubborn, narrow-minded, precise, and easily irritated. She had become very pious and seemed completely to have forgotten the adventures of bygone days. She said: "What do you want?"

He answered: "I don't think the two glasses make much effect. Suppose we were to serve a little champagne. It would not cost more than three or four francs, and we could put on the thin glasses. It would entirely change the appearance of the table."

Mademoiselle Charlotte continued: "I don't see the use of all this expense. But as you are the one who is paying for it, it is none of my business."

He hesitated and tried to convince himself by saying: "I assure you that it will be much better, and that it will give us a little animation for the Twelfth-Night cake." It was this argument that decided him. He took his hat and went downstairs again, and after five minutes he returned with a bottle having on its side a large white label with fancy ornaments, bearing the following inscription: "*Grand vin mousseux de Champagne du Comte de Châtel-Rénouvau*," and Cachelin declared: "It cost me only three francs, and they say that it is excellent."

He took the glasses out of the cupboard and placed them on the table.

The door to the right opened. His daughter entered. She was a tall, plump, rosy, handsome girl, with brown hair and blue eyes. A simple dress outlined her figure, well rounded and supple; her strong voice was almost manly and had those deep accents which make the nerves tingle. She exclaimed: "Gracious! champagne! what joy!" And she clapped her hands in childlike glee.

Her father said to her: "I wish you to be especially agreeable to this gentleman, who has done me a great favor."

She began to laugh a sonorous laugh, which seemed to say: "I know all about it."

The front doorbell rang; doors were opened and closed. Lesable appeared. He wore evening dress, a white cravat, and white gloves. He produced quite a sensation. Cachelin had sprung forward,

confused and delighted, exclaiming: "But, my friend, this was to be entirely informal; you see I am wearing my business suit."

The young man answered: "I know, you told me; but I am always accustomed to dress in the evening." He bowed to every one, his opera hat under his arm, a flower in his buttonhole. César introduced him: "My sister, Mademoiselle Charlotte—my daughter, Coralie, whom we familiarly call Cora."

Everybody bowed. Cachelin continued: "We have no drawing-room. It's a little annoying, but we are used to it."

"It's charming!" Lesable replied.

They relieved him of his hat, which he wished to keep. Then he began to take off his gloves. Everybody was seated; they were observing him across the table in silence. Cachelin asked: "Did the chief stay late? I left a little early in order to help the ladies."

Lesable answered in an offhand manner: "No. We left together, as we had to discuss the matter of the tarpaulin for Brest. It's a very complicated affair, and is going to give us much trouble."

Cachelin turned to his sister and informed her: "It is Monsieur Lesable who takes care of all the difficult matters of the office. He is the manager's right-hand man."

The old maid bowed politely and declared: "Oh, I know that Monsieur is very capable."

The servant entered, pushing the door with her knee and holding in the air a large tureen of soup. Then the host cried: "Come! let us sit down! If you will place yourself there, Monsieur Lesable, between my sister and my daughter. I suppose that

you are not afraid of the ladies." And dinner began.

Lesable tried to be amiable, with a little air of conceit, almost of condescension, and he kept looking at the young girl from the corner of his eye, marveling at her freshness and her healthy, appetizing appearance. Mademoiselle Charlotte tried to be pleasant, knowing the intentions of her brother, and she upheld the commonplace conversation, which was centered on common subjects. Cachelin, delighted, was talking loudly, joking, pouring out the wine that he had bought an hour before at the wine merchant's at the corner, saying: "A small glass of this Burgundy, Monsieur Lesable? I don't claim that it's of a great vintage, but it is good. It has been kept quite a time in the cellar, and it is pure—I guarantee that. We get it from friends who live there."

The young girl said nothing, a little blushing, a little timid, embarrassed by the proximity of this man, whose thoughts she suspected.

When the lobster appeared, César declared: "There is a person whose acquaintance I shall make with pleasure." Lesable smiled, and told of an author who had called the lobster "the cardinal of the seas," not knowing that this animal was red only when cooked. Cachelin began to laugh with all his might, repeating: "Ha! ha! ha! that's a good one!" But Mademoiselle Charlotte became furious and cried: "I can't see what comparison could have been drawn. That gentleman was very improper. I can appreciate any kind of joke, but I refuse to have the clergy made ridiculous in my presence."

The young man, who wished to please the old maid, took advantage of the occasion to express his

belief in the Catholic faith. He spoke of the bad taste of people who speak lightly of great truths. And he concluded by saying: "I respect and revere the religion of my forefathers. I have been brought up in it, and I shall stick to it until death."

Cachelin was no longer laughing. He was rolling pellets of bread and murmuring: "Quite right, quite right!" Then he changed the conversation, which was boring him, and by an impulse natural to those who are accomplishing the same work every day, he exclaimed: "How angry the handsome Maze must have been not to get his promotion!"

Lesable smiled, saying: "What can you expect? Every one gets awarded according to what he does." And the conversation turned to the ministry, a topic which delighted everybody, as the women knew almost as much about the clerks as Cachelin himself, as they had heard about them every evening. Mademoiselle Charlotte took a great interest in Boissel, on account of the adventures which he told and of his romantic spirit; Mademoiselle Cora took a secret interest in the handsome Maze. Neither of them had ever seen these people. Lesable spoke of them with a certain tone of superiority, just as a minister might speak when passing judgment on his employees. All were listening to him as he was saying: "Maze has indeed a certain merit; but if he wishes to arrive he will have to work harder. He likes society and pleasure. All that distracts the mind. He never will get very far, through his own fault. He may, perhaps, get to be assistant manager, thanks to some outside influence, but nothing more. As for Pitolet, I must admit that he does his work well, but he has no depth. Everything is on the surface with him. He is the kind of

fellow who never could be put at the head of anything important, but who could be well made use of by an intelligent chief who could prepare all his work for him."

Mademoiselle Charlotte asked: "And how about Monsieur Boissel?"

Lesable shrugged his shoulders and answered: "A sorry chap, a sorry chap! He can see nothing in its correct proportions. He imagines wild-goose stories. He is of absolutely no use to us."

Cachelin began to laugh and declared: "But the best of all is Father Savon." And everybody laughed.

Then the conversation turned to the theaters and the plays. Lesable judged dramatic literature with the same tone of authority, classifying the authors clearly, picking out the strong and the weak points of each one with the assurance of a man who considers himself infallible and universal.

The roast had been taken off. César was now taking the crust from the *foies gras* with delicate precaution, in order to give a good opinion of the contents. He said: "I don't know how this one is going to be. But they are usually perfect. We receive them from a cousin who lives in Strasburg." Each one ate the little delicacy from the yellow jar with respectful deliberation.

When the ice appeared it was a disaster. It had melted to a sauce, a soup, a clear liquid floating around in the dish. The little servant had asked the baker's boy, who had arrived at seven o'clock in the morning, to take it out of the mold himself, for fear that she would not know how to do it. Cachelin, in despair, wished to take it back, but he grew calm at the thought of the Twelfth-Night cake, which he cut

with mystery, as if it were a state secret. Each one looked at the symbolic cake, and it was passed around with the order for every one to close his eyes while choosing.

Who would draw the symbol of royalty? A foolish smile was on everybody's face. M. Lesable uttered a little "Ah!" of surprise, and drew from his mouth a large white bean still covered with pastry. Cachelin began to applaud and then cried: "Choose the Queen! choose the Queen!"

The King hesitated a little, wondering whether it would not be tactful to choose Mademoiselle Charlotte. She would be flattered and won over to his side! And then he decided that he actually had been invited to meet Mademoiselle Cora, and that he would look like a simpleton if he chose the aunt. Therefore he turned to his young neighbor and presented her the symbolic bean, saying. "Mademoiselle, allow me to offer you this!"

They looked each other full in the face for the first time. She said: "Thank you, Monsieur!" and received the emblem of dignity.

He was thinking: "This girl is pretty. She has superb eyes. She is a fine specimen of womanhood!" A sharp detonation made both women jump. Cachelin had just uncorked the champagne, which was bubbling over and flooding the table. Then the glasses were filled with bubbles and the host declared: "It is easy to see that it is of a good quality!" But as Lesable was about to drink in order to stop his glass from overflowing, César cried: "The King drinks! the King drinks! the King drinks!" And Mademoiselle Charlotte, also excited, piped in her shrill voice: "The King drinks! the King drinks!"

Lesable emptied his glass with assurance, and, placing it back on the table, he exclaimed: "You see that I am not timid!" Then he turned to Mademoiselle Cora, crying: "Your turn, Mademoiselle!"

She wished to drink, but when everybody began to cry: "The Queen drinks! the Queen drinks," she blushed, began to laugh, and put her glass down in front of her.

The end of the dinner was full of gayety. The King showed himself attentive and gallant to the Queen. When they had finished the cordials, Cachelin announced: "The table will be cleared for us. If it is not raining we can go out on the balcony for a while." He wished to show the view, although it was night. He threw open the glass door. A moist breeze entered. It was as warm outside as in the month of April; and every one went up the step which separated the dining-room from the broad balcony. Nothing could be seen but an indistinct light hovering over the great town, like the halos which are placed around the brows of saints. From place to place the light seemed to be a little brighter, and Cachelin began to explain: "You see, that is Eden shining over there. That long line shows the boulevards. How clearly they can be distinguished! In the daytime the view from here is splendid. No matter how far you travel, you will never see anything more beautiful."

Lesable was leaning against the iron railings, beside Cora, who was looking out into space, silent, absorbed, suddenly seized by one of these sad languors which at times benumb the soul. Mademoiselle Charlotte returned to the room, fearing the dampness. Cachelin continued to talk, stretching

out his arm in order to indicate the directions in which could be found the Invalides, the Trocadéro, the Arc de Triomphe de l'Etoile.

Lesable murmured to Cora: "And you, Mademoiselle Cora, do you like to look at Paris from up here?"

She started as if she had been just waked up, and answered: "Oh, yes, especially at night; I think of what is happening out there in front of us, how many happy and unhappy souls there are in all those houses! If we could only see everything, how much we should learn!"

He had drawn closer so that their shoulders were touching, and he said: "It must be wonderful on a moonlight evening!"

She murmured: "Yes, indeed. One might think it an engraving by Gustave Doré. What a pleasure it would be to take a walk on the roofs!"

Then he questioned her about her tastes, her dreams, her pleasures. She answered, without embarrassment, like a quiet, sensible girl who is not too deep. He found her to be full of common sense, and he thought that it would be really delightful to be able to pass his arm around this round, firm waist and to press many short kisses, just as one takes short sips of excellent brandy, on this fresh cheek, near the tip of the ear, on which was reflected the light from a street lamp. He felt himself attracted, moved by this sensation of a woman near him, by this thirst for mature and pure flesh, and by this delicate seductiveness of the young girl. It seemed to him as if he could stand there hours, nights, weeks, forever, leaning near her, feeling her near him, penetrated by the charm of her contact. And something like a poetic sentiment stirred his

heart, facing the great Paris stretched out in front of him, brilliant with lights, living its nocturnal life of pleasure and revelry. It seemed to him as if he were dominating the enormous city; and he felt that it would be delightful every evening to lean on this balcony, near a woman, to love her, to kiss her lips, and to embrace her above the vast city, above all the loves which it inclosed, vulgar satisfaction, all common desires; to feel one's self near the stars.

There are evenings when the least exalted souls begin to dream, as if they were growing wings. Perhaps he was a little tipsy.

Cachelin left in order to look for his pipe, and he returned, lighting it. He said: "I know that you do not smoke; that is why I do not offer you any cigarettes. There is nothing better than to smoke one here. If I had to dwell down below, I don't believe that I should live. We could live there if we wished, for the house belongs to my sister, just as do the two neighboring ones, the one to the right and the one to the left. That gives her a pretty good income. These houses were not expensive when she bought them."

Then, turning around toward the room, he cried: "How much did you pay for these rooms, Charlotte?"

The shrill voice of the old maid could be heard. Lesable was able to distinguish only fragments of the conversation: ". . . in eighteen hundred and sixty-three . . . thirty-five francs . . . built later . . . the three houses . . . a banker . . . sold again for at least five hundred thousand francs. . . ."

She talked about her fortune with the same willingness that an old soldier speaks of the campaign.

She enumerated her purchases, the propositions which had been made to her since, the highest values, etc.

Lesable became quite interested, turned around, and now leaned with his back to the railing of the balcony. But as he continued only to catch snatches of the explanation, he suddenly left his young neighbor and returned to the room in order better to hear; he sat down beside Mademoiselle Charlotte and talked to her at length about the probable increase in rent and of what revenue might be derived from the money if well invested in stocks or real estate.

He left toward midnight, promising to return.

A month later there was no other topic of conversation in the ministry excepting of the approaching marriage of Jacques-Léopold Lesable with Mademoiselle Céleste-Coralie Cachelin.

PART III

The young couple settled down on the same floor with Cachelin and Mademoiselle Charlotte, in an apartment which was exactly similar and from which the tenants were driven out.

One matter, however, worried Lesable: The aunt had not been willing to assure the heritage to Cora by any binding act. Nevertheless, she had consented to swear "before God" that her will was made and deposited with Maître Belhomme, her notary. Besides this, she had also promised that her whole fortune would be left to her niece, on one condition. Questioned closely as to this condition, she

refused to explain, but she had also sworn with a kindly little smile that it was easy to fulfil.

Lesable thought that he ought to take exception to these explanations and to this stubbornness of the devoted old woman; as the young woman pleased him immensely, his desire triumphed over his hesitation, and he succumbed to the persistent efforts of Cachelin.

Now, he was happy, although always tormented by one doubt, and he loved his wife, who had in no way belied his expectations. His life continued quiet and monotonous. In a few weeks he had become accustomed to his new position as a married man, and continued to show himself the accomplished clerk that he had always been.

The year rolled by. New Year's Day returned. To his great surprise he did not receive the promotion he expected.

Maze and Pitolet were the only ones to receive advancement; and Boissel confidentially declared to Cachelin that he would thrash his two colleagues some evening when they were leaving the principal entrance before everybody. He did nothing.

For a whole week Lesable did not sleep as a result of the worry that had been caused to him by his not being promoted, notwithstanding all his zeal. Nevertheless, he was working like a dog; he was replacing for an indefinite time the assistant manager, M. Rabot, who had been ill for the past nine months in the Val-de-Grace Hospital; he arrived every morning at half-past eight, and he would not leave until half-past six. What more could they ask for? If they did not appreciate such work and efforts, why, he would do as the others did, that's all! Each one according to his deserts! How could

M. Torchebeuf, who treated him like a son, have sacrificed him? He wished an explanation. He would go to the chief and have a talk with him.

Therefore, one Monday morning, before his comrades arrived, he knocked at the door of this potentate. A sharp voice cried: "Come in!" He entered.

M. Torchebeuf was writing at a large table covered with papers; he was very small, with an enormous head, which seemed almost to be on the table. When he saw his favorite clerk, he said:

"Good morning, Lesable; how are you?"

The young man answered: "Good morning, dear master; very well, and how are you?"

The chief stopped writing and turned around in his chair. His narrow, frail, thin body, inclosed in a black frock-coat of severe cut, seemed entirely out of proportion with the large chair with its leather back. The rosette of an officer of the Legion of Honor, enormous, brilliant of hue, ten times too large for the person who was wearing it, stood out like a red ball on the narrow chest, crushed under an enormous head, as if the whole being had been developed in the form of a dome, like a mushroom.

The jaw was pointed, the cheeks were hollow, the eyes bulging, and the brow was disproportionately high and covered with white hairs brushed back. "Sit down, my friend," said M. Torchebeuf, "and tell me what brings you here."

For all the other employees he showed a military briskness, considering himself as a captain on his boat, for the ministry represented for him an enormous vessel, the flagship of all the French squadrons.

Lesable, a little moved, a little pale, stammered:

“ Dear master, I have come to ask you whether I have not been faithful in everything? ”

“ Why, of course, my dear fellow, why do you ask me such a question? ”

“ Why, I was a little surprised at not receiving any promotion this year as in the previous year. Allow me to explain to the end, dear master, and to beg your pardon for my audacity. I know that I have obtained exceptional favors and unexpected advantages from you. I know that promotion is usually given only every two or three years; but allow me to point out that I do about four times the work of an ordinary clerk, and that I work at least twice as long. If the results of my work are balanced with the remuneration which I receive, the former would certainly be found to be far above the latter! ”

He had carefully prepared his speech, and considered it excellent.

M. Torchebeuf, surprised, was searching for an answer. At last he said, a little coldly: “ Although, as a rule, a discussion of such matters between manager and clerk is not admissible, I am willing, for once, to answer you, in view of your very meritorious services.

“ I proposed you for promotion just as I have proposed it in preceding years. But the director set your name aside, in view of the fact of your marriage, which assures to you a fine future, more than comfort, a fortune which none of your companions can ever expect to obtain. Taken all in all, is it not fair that each one should have his share? You will become rich, very rich. Three hundred francs a year will not be much for you, while this little increase would mean much for the others. There, my

friend, is the reason why you were left behind this year."

Lesable, confused and irritated, withdrew.

That evening, at dinner, he was very disagreeable to his wife. She was usually gay and even-tempered, but wilful; when she really wished a thing she never gave in. She no longer had for him the sensual charm of the first few days, and, although she could always awaken a desire in him, for she was pretty and fresh-looking, he at times felt that disillusion so close to disgust between two beings. The thousand trivial or grotesque details of existence, careless morning dressing, slovenly wrappers, faded kimonos—for they were not rich—and all the necessary little affairs when seen from too close took away the illusion of marriage, faded that flower of poetry which, from a distance, leads lovers on. Aunt Charlotte made his home most disagreeable, for she no longer left the house; she intruded in everything, wished to govern everything, made remarks about everything, and, as all were afraid of wounding her, she was tolerated with resignation, but also with a growing and secret exasperation. She would walk across the apartment with the dragging step of an old woman, and in her shrill voice she would continually say: "You ought to do this; you ought to do that!"

When the couple were alone, Lesable, unnerved, exclaimed: "Your aunt is becoming unbearable! I'll have nothing more to do with her. Do you hear? I'll have nothing more to do with her." And Cora would quietly answer: "What can I do?"

Then he would grow angry, crying: "It's terrible to have such a family!"

She would answer calmly: "Yes, the family is

odious, the family is terrible, but the inheritance is good, isn't it? Don't be a fool! It's as much to your interest as it is to mine to humor Aunt Charlotte."

And he would keep still, not knowing what to answer.

The aunt now worried them continually, with her fixed idea that they should have a child. She would push Lesable into a corner and hiss in his face: "Nephew, I expect you to be a father before my death. I wish to see my heir. You can't make me believe that Cora was not made to be a mother. It is sufficient to look at her. When one marries, nephew, it is in order to have a family. The Holy Catholic Church forbids sterile marriages. I know that you are poor and that a child is expensive. But when I am gone you will lack for nothing. I want a little Lesable, I want one, do you hear me!"

As, after fifteen months of married life, her desire was not yet realized, she began to grow doubtful, and became pressing. She would whisper practical advice to Cora, like a woman who has known many things in her day and who can still remember them when it is necessary.

But one morning she felt unable to get up. As she never had been sick, Cachelin, worried, knocked at his son-in-law's door: "Run over to Doctor Barbette; please also tell the chief that I shall be unable to go to the office to-day, in view of present circumstances."

Lesable lived in anguish all day, unable to work, write, or attend to business. M. Torchebeuf, surprised, asked him: "Why are you so preoccupied to-day, Monsieur Lesable?" And Lesable nervously answered: "I am very tired, dear master.

I spent the whole night by our aunt's bedside; she is in a very serious condition."

The manager continued coldly: "As long as Monsieur Cachelin was there, that was sufficient. I do not wish to see my office disorganized for personal reasons of my clerks."

Lesable had placed his watch in front of him on the table, and was awaiting five o'clock with a feverish impatience. As soon as the great clock rang in the court of honor, he escaped, for the first time leaving the office at the time specified by regulations. He was so impatient that he even took a cab to return home. He ran up the stairs. As the servant opened the door, he stammered: "How is she?"

"The doctor says that she is pretty low."

His heart fluttered, and he stood still from emotion, asking: "Really?"

Suppose she were to die!

He did not dare enter the sick-room, and he had Cachelin summoned to him. His father-in-law immediately appeared, opening the door carefully. He was wearing his dressing-gown and a little skull-cap; he whispered: "She is very low, very low indeed. She has been unconscious for the last four hours. The priest was here during the afternoon."

Lesable began to feel a weakness in his legs, and he sat down, asking: "Where is my wife?"

"She is with her aunt."

"Exactly what does the doctor say?"

"He says that it's an attack. She may recover, but she may also die during the night."

"Do you need me? If you do not, I prefer not to enter. It would be very painful for me to see her in this state."

“No, you need not go in. If there is anything new I will call you immediately.”

Lesable returned to his apartment. Everything seemed changed, larger, clearer. But as he could not keep still, he went out on the balcony. It was at the end of July, and the enormous sun, just as it was ready to disappear behind the two towers of the Trocadéro, was pouring out a torrent of fire from the broad, expansive roofs. A broad patch of red at his feet took on, farther up, tints of pale gold, then yellow, then of a delicate green, flecked with light, and then finally took on a pure fresh hue overhead.

Swallows darted like hardy visible arrows over the crimson sky; and over the infinite crowd of houses and the distant country floated a rose-colored mist into which rose the church steeples and all the tall monuments. The Arc de Triomphe de l'Etoile appeared enormous and black, and the dome of the Invalides seemed like another sun which had fallen from celestial heights on the back of another edifice. Lesable was holding the iron railing in his hand, and drinking in the air as if it were wine. He was filled with a desire to jump, to cry out loud and wave his arms; he felt full of a profound and triumphant joy. Life appeared to him in a radiant hue. A future full of happiness! What should he do? And he began to dream.

A slight noise behind him made him start. It was his wife. Her eyes were red and swollen; she looked tired. She held up her forehead for him to kiss, and said: “We shall eat with father in order to be near her. While we are eating the servant will stay with her.”

He followed her into the neighboring apartment.

Cachelin was already seated at the table, awaiting his daughter and his son-in-law. A cold chicken, some potato salad and strawberry jam were on the sideboard; the soup was steaming in the plates. All sat down. Cachelin declared: "I don't care to go through many days like this. It hasn't been very enjoyable." He said this in an indifferent tone and with a self-satisfied look. He began to devour his food with great appetite, finding the chicken excellent and the potato salad delicious.

But Lesable was worried and ate little; he barely listened to the conversation, as if expecting a sound to come from the neighboring room, which remained perfectly silent, however. Cora did not eat, either; she was moved, tearful, and kept wiping her eyes from time to time with the corner of her napkin.

"What did the chief say?" Cachelin asked.

Lesable answered him in the most detailed fashion, taking great care not to omit the slightest incident; but this did not satisfy his father-in-law, who continued to ply him with questions, as if he had been away from the ministry for a year and wanted to know the changes that had taken place.

"It must have created quite a sensation when they were told she was ill?" And he began to dream of his sensational reëntry, after her death, and of the questions which would be showered upon him by his colleagues. He said, however, as if to silence a secret remorse: "It isn't that I wish the poor woman any harm! God knows that I should like to have her among us forever, but it will create a sensation, anyhow. Old Man Savon will surely forget the Commune this time—for a few moments, anyway."

They were just beginning to eat the strawberries when the door of the sick-chamber was opened. The three diners were instantly upon their feet, and remained startled for a few seconds. The little servant appeared, with the same impassible and stupid air. She said quietly: "She's stopped breathing."

Cachelin threw his napkin on the table and rushed into the other room like a madman; Cora followed him, her heart beating fast; but Lesable kept near the door, and stared at the bed, the white sheets of which could hardly be seen in the dim light. He saw his father-in-law leaning over the bed, motionless; and suddenly he heard the former's voice, which seemed to come from afar, very far, one of those voices that one hears in dreams, and tell of the most astounding things. It said: "It is all over!" He saw his wife fall upon her knees, press her head against the sheets and sob. Then he decided to enter the room, and when Cachelin rose, he saw, upon the white pillow-case, Aunt Charlotte's face—her eyes were closed, and she looked stiff and pale, very much like a wax figure.

He inquired anxiously: "Is it all over?"

Cachelin, who was also contemplating his sister, turned toward him and they looked into each other's eyes. He answered "Yes," at the same time trying to make his face take on an expression of sorrow; but the two men had penetrated each other, and after exchanging knowing glances, they shook hands instinctively, as if to thank each other for mutual services rendered.

Then they lost no time in busying themselves with the many things which have to be done in a house where a death has just occurred.

Lesable went to get the doctor and undertook also to do the other most urgent errands.

He put on his hat and rushed down the stairs, being in a hurry to get to the street and breathe the fresh air, to think freely, and enjoy his good luck.

After he had done his various errands, he took a stroll on the boulevards, for he was eager now to see many people, to mingle with them, and enjoy the gay evening life. He almost wanted to shout at the top of his lungs, so that every one could hear him: "I am worth fifty thousand francs a year!" and he walked along, with his hands in his pockets, examining all the show-windows, full of jewels and luxurious furniture, joyously thinking: "I shall now be able to afford all this."

Suddenly he stopped before a store that made a specialty of the various things used for mourning attire. A vague fear upset him: "What if she were not dead, after all? Suppose they had been mistaken?"

He hurried home, spurred on by the desire to make sure that his fears were not true.

As soon as he arrived, he inquired: "Did the doctor come?"

Cachelin answered: "Yes. He has confirmed the decease, and said he would file the certificate himself."

They then went into the death-chamber. Cora was still weeping, seated in an armchair. She wept softly, almost noiselessly, and with less grief now, but with that facility for tears which is common to all women.

As soon as they were all three alone in the room, Cachelin said, in low tones: "Now that the

servant has retired, let us search around to see whether there is anything hidden in the furniture."

The two men set about the work. They emptied the drawers, searched all the pockets, and unfolded the slightest bit of paper that came into their hands. At midnight they had not yet found anything interesting. Cora had fallen asleep and was snoring in a regular fashion. César inquired: "Shall we remain here until daybreak?" Lesable was perplexed, though he finally decided it would be the proper thing to do. The father-in-law then suggested: "Let us bring in a few armchairs," and they made themselves comfortable in two silk-flock easy-chairs which belonged to the young couple's bedroom.

An hour later the three relatives were sleeping and snoring irregularly, before the corpse, icy in its eternal immobility.

They woke up next morning when the servant entered the room. Cachelin readily confessed, as he rubbed his eyes: "I've been dozing for the last half hour or so."

But Lesable, who immediately regained his composure, said: "Yes, I noticed it. I didn't fall asleep at all; I merely shut my eyes to rest them."

Cora went to her room.

Then Lesable inquired, with an air of apparent indifference: "When do you wish to go to the notary's to find out about the will?"

"Why—this morning, if you wish."

"Is it necessary that Cora accompany us?"

"It would be better, for, after all, she's the heir."

And Lesable went out with his usual quick step. The office of Maître Belhomme had just opened,

when Cachelin, Lesable, and his wife presented themselves in deep mourning, with very sad faces.

The notary had them ushered in immediately, and offered them seats. Cachelin was the first to speak: "Monsieur, you remember me? I am Mademoiselle Charlotte Cachelin's brother. These are my daughter and my son-in-law. My poor sister died yesterday; we'll bury her to-morrow. As you are the depositary of her will, we come to ask you whether she has not formulated some request relative to her inhumation, or if you have not some communication to make to us."

The notary opened a drawer, took out an envelope, from which he drew a paper, and said: "Here, Monsieur, is a duplicate of the will, with the contents of which I shall make you acquainted immediately. The other copy must remain in my hands." And he read:

"I, the undersigned, Victorine-Charlotte Cachelin, here express my last wishes:

"I bequeath my entire fortune, of about a million one hundred and twenty thousand francs, to the children who will be born of the marriage of my niece, Céleste-Coralie Cachelin, the possession of the income to go to the parents until the majority of the eldest of their descendants.

"The dispositions which follow regulate the shares to which each child shall be entitled and also that remaining to the parents until the end of their days.

"In the event of my death before my niece has an heir, my entire fortune will remain in the hands of my notary, for three years, for my wish above expressed to be complied with, if a child is born during that time.

"But should Coralie not obtain from Heaven a descendant during the three years following my death, my fortune is to be distributed, by the hands of my notary, among the poor and the benevolent institutions contained in the following list."

There followed an interminable series of names of communities, of ciphers, of societies, and also of instructions.

Then Maître Belhomme politely handed the paper over to Cachelin, who stood dumfounded.

The notary thought he ought to add a few words of explanation: "Mademoiselle Cachelin," said he, "when she did me the honor to speak to me for the first time of her project of making this will, expressed to me the very great desire which she had to see an heir of her race. She replied to all my reasoning by simply stating her wish all the more firmly; this wish was very strong inasmuch as it was based on a religious conviction of hers that a sterile union was the sign of a divine malediction. I have not been able to modify her intentions in the least. Rest assured that I regret it exceedingly." Then he added as he turned around toward Coralie: "I have not the slightest doubt that the desideratum will be soon realized."

And the three relatives went away, much too startled to think at all for the present.

They wended their way homeward, side by side, without saying a word, ashamed and furious, as if they had mutually robbed each other. Cora's grief disappeared now, as if her aunt's ingratitude had suddenly dried up her tears. Lesable, whose pale lips were contracted by the bitterness of this disappointment, said to his father-in-law: "Let me see the paper myself." Cachelin handed it to him, and the young man began to read it. He had stopped walking now, and remained on the sidewalk, indifferent to the jostling of the crowd, lost in his perusal of the will, every word of which he studied with a piercing and practical eye. The

other two waited silently for him, a few steps away.

Then he said, as he handed the paper back: "There is nothing to be done. She has fooled us all beautifully."

Cachelin, whom this dissipation of his hopes irritated, answered: "It was for you to have a child, *sacré bleu!* You knew that she wanted it long ago."

Lesable shrugged his shoulders without answering.

When they reached the house they found it full of people, those people who make it a business to attend to the needs of the dead, as it were. Lesable retired to his room as if he were through with it all, and César stormed at every one, shouting that he wanted to be left alone, ordering that the whole thing be done in a hurry, even complaining that they were not ridding him quickly enough of this corpse.

Cora, shut up in her room, did not make the slightest noise. But Cachelin, an hour later, went to rap at his son-in-law's door: "I wish to submit," said he, "a few reflections, for we must come to an understanding about this. My opinion is that we conduct a decent funeral, so as not to awaken any suspicion at the ministry. We'll settle about these expenses later. Besides, nothing is lost. You haven't been married long, and it would be altogether too unfortunate if you could not have children. You must attend to that now. Let us see what must be done immediately, and let us all set to work. Will you go to the ministry? I shall address a few envelopes for the invitations to the ceremony."

Lesable admitted that his father-in-law was

right, and they set to work at opposite ends of the table, and began to fill the blank spaces on the black-bordered cards.

Then they had breakfast. Cora came in the room, perfectly indifferent to everything about her, and ate heartily, as she had eaten nothing the evening before.

As soon as she had finished she returned to her room. Lesable left the house to go to the ministry, while Cachelin installed himself on the balcony, in order to enjoy a pipe. The hot sun of a summer day fell perpendicularly upon the multitude of roofs, some of which were pierced with windows which blazed as with fire and reflected the dazzling rays which the eye could not sustain.

And Cachelin, in his shirt-sleeves, looked with squinting eyes upon the green hillocks far away, back of the city and its dusty suburbs. He thought of how the Seine flowed there, broad, calm, and fresh, at the foot of the hills which had trees on their slopes, and how much better it would be to lie upon this verdure, and gaze into the river, than to be sitting on this burning terrace. He was ill at ease, oppressed by an ever-present tormenting thought: the grievous sensation of their disaster, of this unexpected misfortune, all the more bitter and brutal that the hope had been so vivid and tardy in its so ardently desired realization; and he said aloud, as people do in a very perturbed state of mind: "The dirty witch!"

Behind him in the chamber he heard the movements of the undertakers and the continuous noise of the hammer which was driving the nails into the wood of the coffin. He had not seen his sister since his visit to the notary.

But little by little the gayety, the charm of this beautiful summer day penetrated him, body and soul, and he thought that all was not lost. Why should not his daughter have a child? She had not been married two years yet. His son-in-law seemed to be vigorous, well built, and healthy, although short. They would have a child, by heavens! Besides, it was absolutely necessary.

Lesable furtively entered the ministry and slipped into his office. He found a piece of paper in his desk containing these words: "The chief wants you." His first movement was one of impatience, of revolt against this despotism which was about to fall on him again; then he was brusquely seized by a desire to get ahead. He would be chief, too, and shortly, at that; he would rise higher, if possible!

Without taking off his frock-coat, he went at once to M. Torchebeuf. He presented himself with one of those downcast countenances appropriate in sad circumstances, even adding an air of very deep and real sorrow, such as is worn by people who are torn by violent contradictory emotions.

The enormous head of the chief was bent over a mass of papers. He raised it and asked brusquely: "I needed you all morning. Why didn't you come?" Lesable answered: "Dear master, we have had the misfortune to lose my aunt, Mademoiselle Cachelin, and I was about to ask you to attend the funeral, which will take place to-morrow."

M. Torchebeuf's face was serene again. He answered, with a certain shade of consideration: "That's different. I thank you, and give you the day off, for you must have your hands full."

But Lesable wished to show his zeal, and answered quickly: "I thank you, dear master, but as everything has already been done, I expect to remain here until the regular hour for closing."

And he returned to his desk.

The news soon spread, and his fellows came from all the departments to tender him their congratulations more than their condolences, and also to see just what was his demeanor. He endured their speeches and glances with a mask of a resigned countenance worthy of an actor and a tact which was a revelation to all. "He certainly stands it well," said some. And others added: "He must be satisfied, after all is said and done."

Maze, with his more audacious and careless demeanor of the man of the world, asked him: "Do you know exactly how much she had?"

Lesable answered, with a perfect imitation of disinterestedness: "No, not precisely. The will says twelve hundred thousand francs. I know it, because the notary was obliged to communicate a few instructions relative to her inhumation."

It was the consensus of opinion that Lesable would not remain at the ministry. With an income of sixty thousand francs one does not remain a paper-scratcher. One is a somebody and one can become anything at all he wishes. Some thought that he wanted to be counsel of State; others that he hoped to become a deputy some day. The chief was expecting to receive his resignation, which he would give to the directors.

The entire ministry came to the obsequies, which were deemed very meager. But it was said: "It was Mademoiselle Cachelin who desired them so. It was in the will."

The next day Cachelin went back to his office, and Lesable, after a week's illness, also returned to his occupation, somewhat pale, but as assiduous and zealous as formerly. One would never have thought that any grave incident had just taken place in their lives. It was merely noticed that they ostentatiously smoked big cigars, spoke of government bonds, railroad dividends, stocks in general, like men who have much money in their possession, and it was learned that they had rented a cottage in one of the suburbs of Paris for the rest of the summer.

Every one thought: "They are just as stingy as the old lady; it's in the family; birds of a feather flock together; but, anyway, it's not right for them to retain their clerkships when they have so much money."

After a while the whole affair dropped out of the others' minds. They were rated and classed accordingly.

PART IV

Even during the funeral of Aunt Charlotte, Lesable could not help thinking of the million, and his rage was all the more violent that he was obliged to keep it secret, so that he hated all the world on account of his deplorable misfortune.

He secretly asked himself: "Why didn't I have children in the two years we have been married?" And the fear that his union would be sterile made his heart beat.

Then, just like the boy who sees the glittering prize at the top of the pole, and promises himself

to reach it by sheer strength and will-power, and to summon up the necessary vigor and tenacity, Le-sable desperately resolved to become a father. So many others are, why shouldn't he be, too? Maybe he had been negligent, careless, through complete indifference on that score. Never having experienced the desire to have an heir, he never had taken much pains to produce such a result. But henceforth he would concentrate all his efforts to that end; he would neglect nothing, and he would succeed, since it was now his firm purpose.

But when he was home again he felt ill at ease, and was obliged to take to his bed.

The doctor prescribed an absolute rest, to be followed later by a certain course of treatment. A brain fever was feared.

Eight days later he was up and about, however, and able to go back to his work.

But he did not yet dare approach the conjugal couch. He hesitated and trembled like a general who is about to engage in battle, a battle upon which his whole future depends. And every evening he put it off to the next, awaiting one of those days of great health, comfort, bubbling energy, on which one feels capable of anything. He was all the time feeling his pulse, and, finding it too weak or feverish, he would take tonics, eat raw meat, and take long walks, before going home.

As he was not satisfied with the slowness of his improvement, he conceived the idea of finishing the summer in one of the suburbs of Paris. And soon he felt persuaded that the fresh air would have the most beneficial influence on his temperament. In his case the country air would produce the most marvelous results. He consoled himself with the

certainty of his future success, and he would repeat to his father-in-law with an air of vague insinuation: "When we are in the country everything will be all right."

The word "country" alone seemed to him to bear with it a mysterious meaning.

So they rented a villa at Bezons, and lived there together. The two men walked across the plain to the station at Colombes every morning, and did the same every evening.

Cora, delighted with this life along the banks of the sweet little river, would idle away her time in picking flowers and gathering enormous bouquets of delicate, trembling ferns.

Every evening they would take a stroll as far as the tollgate of the Morne, and enjoy a bottle of beer at the restaurant of the Willows. The river, retarded in its course by the long file of stakes, poured between them and leaped, bubbled, and foamed over a space a hundred feet wide; the roaring of the falls made the soil tremble, while a fine mist of vapor floated in the air, rising from the cascade like a light smoke, throwing on the surroundings a delightful odor of spray and savor of wet earth. As night fell a great light below and ahead of them indicated Paris, which made Cachelin say every evening: "What a city, after all!" From time to time a train, passing on the iron bridge which crossed the end of the island, rattled by like a peal of thunder and disappeared quickly, either to the right or to the left, bound for Paris or the sea.

They returned home slowly, watching the moon rise, sometimes seating themselves on the bank to see its soft yellow light fall upon the river, whose rippling waters looked very much like a moiré silk

the color of fire. The frogs uttered their short metallic cries. The calls of the night bird rang out on the air, and sometimes a large, mute shadow glided on the river, troubling her tranquil and luminous course. It was a boat occupied by freebooters who, throwing in suddenly their net, drew it back noiselessly into their boat, dragging in its vast and somber mesh a shoal of shining and quivering gudgeons, like a treasure drawn from the bottom of the sea, a living treasure of silver fish.

Cora, deeply moved, leaned tenderly on the arm of her husband, whose intentions she had guessed, although he said nothing to her about them. It was for the pair like a new betrothal, a second expectation of the kiss of love. Sometimes he caressed her furtively behind the ear at the back of the neck, on that charming spot of tender flesh where the first hairs curl. She responded by a slight pressure of the hand; and they desired each other, but abstained, incited and held back by a will more energetic, by the phantom of the million.

Cachelin, appeased by the new hope which he felt around him, lived happily, drank much, and ate more, feeling at twilight quite poetical—that foolish tenderness which comes to the clumsiest before the fields, a shower of light in the branches, a setting sun on the distant hillocks, with purple reflections on the river. And he declared: “Before such things I have to believe in God. It gets me here”—and he indicated the pit of his stomach—“and I feel uneasy. I feel queer. It seems to me that I must have been thrown in a sort of bath that makes me want to cry.”

Lesable was now getting better, and he was suddenly seized with ardors which were a surprise to

him; he experienced desires to run and frisk about like a colt, to roll in the grass, and to shout for joy.

He thought that it was now the right time. It was a real night of espousal. It was like a honeymoon, full of caresses and hope.

Then they found out that their attempts were fruitless and their confidence was in vain.

They were in despair. But Lesable did not lose hope; he persevered with superhuman energy. His wife, actuated by the same motive, and just as fearful as he of the same misfortune, of a stronger nature than he, excited his embraces and made desperate appeals to his failing powers.

They returned to Paris in the early part of October.

Life was becoming hard for them. They had unkind words for each other at the slightest provocation; and Cachelin, who was beginning to realize the situation, harassed them with the sarcastic and bitter epigrams of an old trooper.

And they were ever pursued by the same thought that tortured them, embittered their mutual hatred, that of the unattainable heritage. Cora treated her husband roughly. She acted as if he were a little boy, or a man of no consequence. Cachelin would say at the supper-table: "If I had been rich I should have had many children. . . . But when one is poor one must be reasonable." And, turning to his daughter, he would add: "You must be like myself, but . . ." Then he would cast a meaning glance at his son-in-law and shrug his shoulders in a contemptuous manner.

Lesable made no answer, like a man of great superiority who had been unfortunate enough to marry into a family of boors. At the ministry they

all said he was not looking well. The chief clerk even asked him once: "Aren't you sick? You look changed."

He answered: "Not at all, dear master. I may be a little tired. I have worked a great deal these last few weeks, as you may see for yourself."

He expected to receive a certain advancement at the end of the year, and it was with this hope that he had resumed his work with ardor.

He received only a small present, the smallest of all those that were given. His father-in-law got nothing.

Lesable was indignant and went immediately to his superior, and, for the first time, addressed him as "Monsieur." "Why should I work, Monsieur, like a slave, if I am not to be properly recompensed?"

M. Torchebeuf was vexed: "I have told you already, Monsieur Lesable, that I did not wish to discuss such subjects with you. Besides, it is not fair for you to envy any favor which may be conferred upon your colleagues, when you consider your financial position."

Lesable could not help blurting out: "But I possess nothing, Monsieur. My aunt left her fortune to the first child born to us. My father-in-law and I are living on our salaries."

The astonished chief clerk answered: "If you're not rich at present, you will be some day; so it's all the same."

Lesable withdrew, more downcast over the loss of this advancement than over the unattainable million itself.

A few days later, just as Cachelin had installed

himself at his desk, the handsome Maze entered the room, a smile upon his lips; then appeared Pitolet with his eyes sparkling; next, Boissel, who opened the door and advanced slowly, tittering and exchanging meaning looks with the others. Old Man Savon continued his copying, his clay pipe in the corner of his mouth, seated on his high chair, his two feet stuck in between the lower bars of his chair, schoolboy fashion.

No one spoke. They seemed to be waiting for something, and Cachelin continued to register his papers, announcing loudly, according to his custom: "Toulon: accessories for officers' use, for the *Richelieu*. Lorient: diving apparatus for the *Desaix*. Brest: samples of sails of English manufacture for tests."

Lesable put in an appearance. He came every morning to collect whatever papers were for him, as his father-in-law no longer even took the pains to send them by the porter.

While he was searching among the papers scattered on the order clerk's desk, Maze looked at him from the corner of his eye and rubbed his hands, and Pitolet, who was rolling a cigarette, was all smiles, like one who is overjoyous: "Say, Father Savon, you've learned many things in the course of your lifetime, haven't you?"

The old man, who was afraid that they were about to make game of him and refer to his wife again, made no answer.

Pitolet went on: "At any rate, you found out the secret of making children, since you've had several?"

The good man raised his head: "You know I don't like to jest about this subject. I was unfor-

tunate in marrying an unworthy woman. When I had proof of her infidelity, I divorced her."

Maze, putting on an indifferent air, asked him very seriously: "You obtained proofs on more than one occasion, didn't you?"

And Old Man Savon replied gravely: "Yes, Monsieur."

Pitolet joined in: "Still, you are the father of three or four children, aren't you?"

The poor fellow blushed and stammered: "You are trying to hurt me, Monsieur Pitolet; but you will not succeed. My wife had three children. I have every reason to suppose the first is mine, but I deny that the other two are."

Pitolet said: "Every one says the first is yours. That's enough. It's great to have a child, very nice and lucky. I wager Lesable would be delighted to have one, just one, like you."

Cachelin had stopped registering. He did not laugh, although Old Man Savon was always a butt for his jokes, which he never failed to hurl at him, whenever the subject of his marital woes came up.

Lesable had collected his papers; but, knowing well they were attacking him, wished to stay, held back by pride, confused and irritated, above all curious to learn who had betrayed his secret. He remembered his conversation with the head clerk, and he soon realized that he must show a bold front and much energy, if he did not want to be the laughing-stock of the whole place.

Boissel paced the floor, tittering all the while. He imitated the hoarse voices of the street criers, and bellowed: "The secret for begetting children, for ten centimes—two cents! Ask for the secret of

begetting children—revealed by Monsieur Savon, with many horrible details.”

Everybody laughed, except Lesable and his father-in-law. And Pitolet, turning toward the order clerk, said: “What’s the matter with you, Cachelin? You don’t look as if you thought it funny that Old Man Savon had a child with his wife. I think it is very comical. Not every one can do as much.”

Lesable began to rummage among his papers again, pretended to read and ignore the conversation; but he was livid.

Boissel repeated in the same hoarse voice: “Concerning the utility of heirs in obtaining inheritances—only two cents.”

Then Maze, who did not approve of this coarse wit and who, deep in his heart, had a grudge against Lesable for having robbed him of his chance of getting the million, asked his more fortunate colleague: “Why, what’s the matter, Lesable, you’re very pale?”

Lesable looked him square in the face. He hesitated a few moments and tried to find some cutting or witty rejoinder, but, failing, merely answered: “Nothing. I am just wondering where you got all this finesse of mind.”

Maze, standing with his back to the fire and playing with his coat-tails, replied laughingly: “We do our best. We’re just like yourself, we do not always succeed!”

A peal of laughter rang out. Old Man Savon, who was beginning to understand that he was not the butt this time, looked on with much astonishment, his mouth wide open. Cachelin awaited the outcome, ready to pounce on the nearest one to him.

Lesable stammered: "I don't understand. What is it I did not succeed in?"

The handsome Maze let go one of his coat-tails to curl his mustache, and said graciously: "I know that you usually succeed in anything you wish. So I'm wrong in mentioning you. Besides, it's all about Old Man Savon's children, not yours, since you have none. And, as you always succeed in whatever you undertake, it must be that you did not want any children."

Lesable inquired impatiently: "What business is it of yours?"

At this Maze also raised his voice: "I say, try to be decent, or I'll make you so."

But Lesable trembled with anger, and losing all self-control, replied: "Monsieur Maze, I am neither a fool nor a dandy, like yourself. I forbid you ever to speak to me again. I despise you and all your kind." And he looked defiantly at Boissel and Pitolet.

Maze saw suddenly that his true strength would be in remaining calm and ironical; but, wounded in his most touchy parts, he wished to hurt his enemy deeply, so he went on in a patronizing manner, although his eyes sparkled with rage: "My dear Lesable, you're forgetting yourself. I understand your vexation; it's hard to lose a fortune, on account of such a simple little thing, so easy and simple to—— Now, if you wish, I'll do you a favor, for nothing, just for friendship's sake. It will only take five minutes."

He was still going on in that strain when he received full in the chest Father Savon's ink-pot, which Lesable had hurled at him. A flood of ink covered his face and metamorphosed him into a

negro with surprising rapidity. He sprang forth, rolling the whites of his eyes, with his hands ready to strike. But Cachelin covered his son-in-law, and gripping him around the waist, pushed him aside, and deluging him with punches, threw him against the wall. Maze disengaged him by a sudden and violent movement, opened the door, and shouted to the two men: "You'll hear from me!" and he disappeared.

Pitolet and Boissel followed. Boissel explained his moderation by saying he was afraid to mix in for fear of killing some one.

As soon as he was in his office Maze tried to clean up, but without success; he was stained with a violet ink, claimed to be indelible. He stood before his mirror, furious and disconsolate, rubbing his face with all his might. He merely obtained a richer black, mingled with the red of his blood.

Boissel and Pitolet were giving him advice. One suggested that he use olive-oil to wash away the ink, the other was sure ammonia was the best. The office boy was rushed off to an apothecary, who sent back a yellow liquid and a pumice-stone, all of which produced no better results.

Maze, disheartened, sank into a chair and declared: "The only thing to do now is to settle the question of honor. Will you be my seconds and demand of Monsieur Lesable a sufficient apology or the reparation of arms?"

They consented readily and began to discuss the necessary steps to be taken. They were totally ignorant about such affairs, but, unwilling to betray their ignorance and eager to appear correct, their opinions were weak and contradictory. It was finally agreed that a captain of the navy who was

then at the ministry should be consulted. But he knew less. After a few minutes' thinking, he advised them to go and see Lesable and ask to be put in touch with two of his friends.

As they were on their way to the bureau of their colleague, Boissel suddenly stopped. "Ought we not to have our gloves on?" he asked.

Pitolet hesitated an instant. "Perhaps," replied he seriously. "But then we would have to go out to get the gloves, and the chief will stand for no nonsense."

They sent the office boy to bring an assortment from the nearest glove store.

To decide upon the color took more time. Boissel preferred black, Pitolet thought that shade out of place under the circumstances. Finally they chose violet.

Seeing the pair enter gloved and solemn, Lesable raised his head and brusquely demanded: "What do you want?"

Pitolet answered: "Sir, we are charged by our friend, Monsieur Maze, to ask of you an apology or a reparation by arms, for the assault you made upon him."

But Lesable, still exasperated, cried: "What! he insults me, and then he provokes me in the bargain? Tell him that I despise him, and whatever he may do or say."

Boissel advanced tragically and said: "You will oblige us to publish a notice in the papers which will be most distasteful to you."

Pitolet cunningly added: "And which will hurt your reputation and spoil your chances of advancement."

Lesable was taken aback. What could he do?

He thought of gaining time only: "Gentlemen, you will have my answer within ten minutes. Will you wait for it at Monsieur Pitolet's office?"

As soon as he was alone he looked about him, as if to obtain some advice or protection.

A duel! He was about to fight a duel!

He remained startled, frightened, like a peaceful man who had never considered the possibility of such an event, who was not prepared, whose courage was unequal to such a formidable event. He tried to get up, but fell back on his chair, with beating heart. His strength and anger had both suddenly disappeared. But the thought of the opinion of the ministry, the gossip the whole affair was going to give rise to, revived his failing pride, and, at a loss as to what to decide, he went to his chief for advice.

Monsieur Torchebeuf was astonished and perplexed. The necessity of a duel did not appear to him absolute; besides, all this was going to upset the general trend of affairs. He answered: "I cannot say anything. It is a question of honor which does not concern me. Do you wish me to give you a note for the Commandant Bouc? He is very competent in such matters, and he'll be able to guide you."

Lesable accepted the offer and went to the commandant, who even consented to be second; he took an under-chief for another.

Boissel and Pitolet were waiting for them with their gloves on. They had borrowed two chairs from the next office in order to have four.

They saluted gravely, and sat down. Pitolet explained the situation. The commandant, after having listened to it all, said: "It's serious, but not

irreparable; it all depends upon the intention." He was a sly old sailor, who was enjoying himself.

A lengthy discussion ensued, and four different letters were drawn up; excuses were to be tendered from both parties. If Monsieur Maze would acknowledge not having had the intention to offend, Monsieur Lesable, on his part, would proffer excuses for his unconsiderate violence in throwing the ink-well at his opponent.

And the four proxies returned to their clients.

Maze, seated before his table, was agitated by the dread of the possible duel, although expecting to see his adversary retreat, and looked at his cheeks in the little pocket mirror which all office employees carry with them, to guide the adjustment of their hair and cravats before leaving in the evening.

He read the letters which were submitted to him and declared, visibly satisfied: "It seems honorable; I am ready to sign."

Lesable had also accepted without arguing the compromise of his seconds, saying: "If that is your idea, I can but acquiesce."

The four plenipotentiaries met again. Letters were exchanged; they saluted gravely and separated.

An extraordinary commotion reigned through the ministry. Every one was eager for news.

When it was learned that it was terminated with this solution, it was like a general disappointment. Some one said: "That does not give Lesable a child." And the word spread. One of the employees made a song of it.

But, just when everything seemed adjusted, a difficulty arose, suggested by Boissel: "What will be the attitude of the adversaries toward each other,

when face to face? Should they speak or should they feign to be strangers?" It was decided that they should meet, as if by chance, in the office of Monsieur Torchebeuf and exchange before him a few words of politeness.

This ceremony was quickly gone through; and Maze, having sent for a cab, went home to try to cleanse his skin.

Lesable and Cachelin returned together, irritated against one another as if what had happened was due to the other's fault. As soon as he was home Lesable threw his hat off violently and shouted at his wife:

"I've got enough of this. I have to fight a duel for you now!"

She looked at him, astonished and already irritated:

"A duel? Why?"

"Because Maze insulted me because of you."

She drew nearer to him: "Because of me? How?"

He sat down furiously and answered: "He insulted me—that's enough."

But she wanted to know: "I insist upon you telling me what he said about me."

Lesable blushed, then stammered: "He said—he said—— It's about your being sterile."

She gave a start; and then her paternal coarseness became master of her, and she blurted out: "I am sterile? What does he know about it, the knave? Sterile with you, because you're not a man. But if I had married a man, any one at all, I should have had children. Oh, you can talk! It costs me something to marry a cipher like yourself. And what did you answer to the wretch?"

This outburst scared Lesable, and he answered: "I struck him."

She gave him a look of surprise: "And what did he do?"

"He sent me his seconds."

She was becoming interested, attracted like all women by the danger of the situation; and she asked, in a subdued tone, suddenly giving in to a feeling of esteem for the man who was about to fight a duel for her: "When do you fight?"

He replied calmly: "We don't fight; it has been settled by the seconds. Maze apologized to me."

She stared at him very contemptuously: "Oh! I have been insulted, and you let it go without fighting! All you needed to cap the whole was to be a coward!"

He rebelled: "I order you to keep still. I know better than you about affairs of honor. Besides, here is Maze's letter. Here it is; read it."

She snatched the paper away, which she read and fully understood, and sneered: "So you've written a letter, too. Oh! how cowardly men are! I, your wife, have been insulted and you're perfectly satisfied with that. Now, I don't wonder you're unable to have a child. It's all the same. You're just as impotent before women as before men. I have a beautiful specimen in you."

She had suddenly taken on the very air of Cachelin, with all his trooper's gestures and intonations.

There she was before him, her hands on her hips, tall, strong, full of vigor, rounded breast, flushed face, her voice vibrating deeply, the blood coloring her splendid cheeks—looking at this pale

little man before her, somewhat bald, clean-shaven, with the short whiskers of a lawyer. She felt like choking, like smothering him.

She repeated: "You're good for nothing. You even allow any one and every one to surpass you at the ministry."

The door opened; Cachelin came in, attracted by the noise of their voices, and he asked: "What is it?"

She turned around: "I'm just telling that clown a few things."

And Lesable, on raising his eyes, noticed their close resemblance. It seemed to him that a veil had been cast away and that they now appeared to him in their true light, such as they really were, common and coarse. It seemed to him that all hopes were lost and that he was condemned to live eternally with the two.

Cachelin declared: "If only you could divorce him. It isn't right to live with such a capon."

Lesable rose like a madman, and his wrath burst out. He walked up to his father-in-law, spluttering: "Get out of here! Do you hear? You're in my house. Clear out!" And he caught hold of a bottle of sedative water, which he brandished like a club.

Cachelin, intimidated, went out of the room backward, murmuring: "What's struck him now?"

But Lesable's anger was not decreasing; this was too much for him. He turned around to his wife, who looked at him, rather surprised at his violence, and he cried, after putting back the bottle on the dresser: "As for you . . . as for you . . ." But, as he found nothing to say, because

he had no good reason at hand, he stood before her, his face altogether changed and his voice trembling.

She began to laugh.

This laughter, which was nothing short of an insult to him, crazed him, and he sprang at her, catching her by neck, and slapped her frenziedly. She staggered backward, dazed and almost suffocating. She struck the bed, upon which she fell at full length. He held her tight and continued the beating. Suddenly he rose, breathless and exhausted; and, ashamed of his brutality, he stammered: "See now! see now!"

But she did not stir, as if he had killed her. She remained on her back near the edge of the bed, her face buried in her hands. He approached her awkwardly, anxious as to what would happen next and what was taking place in her mind. After a few minutes his anguish increased, and he murmured: "Cora! speak, Cora!" She did not answer, nor did she move. What was the matter with her? What was she doing? Above all, what was she going to do.

His wrath having disappeared as quickly as it had appeared, he felt contemptible, almost like a criminal. He had beaten his wife, he, the well-bred, impassible gentleman! And in the softening of his feelings, during the reaction, he felt like begging her pardon, throwing himself upon his knees, and kissing the cheek he had smitten. He touched lightly one of her hands stretched over her face. She seemed to feel nothing. He petted her, just as one pets a dog that has been scolded. She noticed this. He repeated: "Cora, listen, I'm sorry, listen." She was like a corpse. Then he tried to pull her hand away. It gave way easily,

and he saw an eye staring at him in an alarmed and troubled manner.

He went on: "Listen, Cora; I was too hasty. Your father drove me to it. A man cannot stand such insults."

She made no answer, as if she did not hear. He was at a loss as to what to say or do. He kissed her behind the ear, and, as he rose, he saw a tear in her eye, which trickled down her cheek; her eyelids fluttered nervously and then closed.

He was seized by a deep sorrow, his emotions were roused; he fell on her and clasped her convulsively; he brushed her other hand away with her lips, and, showering her face with kisses, he beseeched her: "My poor Cora, forgive me; for Heaven's sake, forgive me!"

She wept noiselessly and without sobbing, as one does from very grief.

He pressed her to him, caressed her, murmuring all the most endearing words he could find, but she remained insensible. She ceased weeping, though. They remained for some time locked in each other's arms.

Night was approaching and filling the room with its shadows, and when it was altogether dark he became bold and solicited his pardon in such a manner as to revive their mutual hopes.

He soon became himself again. She seemed to be more subdued, even moved, spoke more sweetly than before, and looked at her husband with eyes that were almost caressing, as this unexpected correction had relaxed her nerves. He said with perfect calmness: "Your father must be lonesome all alone; you ought to go and fetch him. Besides, it is supper-time." She went out.

It was seven o'clock; the servant announced dinner; then Cachelin appeared, smiling serenely. The dinner was more cordial and the conversation livelier than it had been for a long time, as if some happy event had just taken place.

PART V

Their ever renewed hopes were never sustained. From month to month their expectations were shattered, in spite of the persistence of Lesable and the coöperation of his wife. Each blamed the other, and Lesable was in despair, emaciated and fatigued. What cut him most was the coarseness of Cachelin, who called him, in their troubled family intimacy, "Monsieur Rooster," in remembrance, probably, of the day when he came near receiving a bottle on the head for having called his son-in-law "capon."

The father and daughter instinctively leagued together, enraged at seeing this fortune escape them, could not torture him enough on account of his impotency, which was the cause of their misfortune.

At the table Cora would say: "We haven't much for dinner. If we were rich it would be otherwise. Well, it isn't my fault."

When Lesable left for his office she would say: "Take your umbrella so as not to bring in here any mud. It isn't my fault if you have to keep up your work as scribbler."

When she went out herself she never failed to grumble: "If I had married another man I'd have a carriage of my own."

She thought of it every minute, hated her hus-

band for it, hurled insults at him continually, and attributed her loss of the money to him only.

One evening, out of patience, he shouted: "Keep still. It's your fault if we don't have children, because I have a child myself!"

He lied, but he preferred anything to this eternal nagging and this shame of being thought impotent.

She was surprised and looked piercingly into his eyes, but perceiving it was a lie, she said contemptuously: "You have a child?"

He answered with effrontery: "Yes, a natural child I'm having brought up at Asnières."

She replied quietly: "We'll go to see him tomorrow, so that I may see what he looks like."

He blushed to his ears and said: "Just as you wish."

She rose early the next morning at seven, and as he looked surprised: "Aren't we going to see your child? You promised to yesterday. Will it have disappeared to-day, perchance?"

He jumped out of bed suddenly: "It isn't a child we're going to see, but a doctor; and he'll tell you a few things."

She answered, like a woman who felt sure of herself: "Very well."

Cachelin was to say at the office that Lesable was ill; and the couple went to the doctor's.

They were ushered into a salon decorated in white and gold, that looked bare and uninhabited despite its numerous chairs. They sat down. Lesable was bashful, deeply moved, and nervous. When it was their turn, they penetrated a sort of luxurious office and were greeted by a short, stout man, ceremonious and cold.

He waited for the exposition of their case; but Lesable could not muster up enough courage to say anything. His wife then took the matter in hand and said in a tranquil manner: "We came to see you because we are unable to have children. A large fortune depends upon this, too."

The consultation was long, minute, and painful. Cora alone seemed unembarrassed and submitted to the examination like one sustained by a high moral purpose.

After studying them both for about two hours the doctor did not commit himself.

"I see nothing abnormal," said he, "nor even anything special. Such cases are frequent. Human bodies are like the human character. When we see so many couples separated by incompatibility of temper, it ought not to be surprising that others can be sterile through physical incompatibility. Madame seems to me to be remarkably well fitted for the offices of maternity. Monsieur, on his side, although normal in every respect, appears a little weakened; perhaps it is the consequence of his great desire to become a father. Will you permit me to make an auscultation?"

Lesable, worried, took off his waistcoat; the doctor kept his ear for a long while on the thorax and the back of the employee, then he tapped him all over the back and stomach.

He found a slight disposition to heart trouble and even to consumption.

"You must take care of yourself, Monsieur, and seriously, too. It's due to an anæmic condition, and comes from exhaustion. Those little accidents if not treated soon become serious and incurable, too."

Lesable became white from anguish and asked

for a prescription. He was ordered a very complicated *régime*—iron, rare meat, consommé, and a sojourn in the country during the summer. Then the doctor gave them advice for the time when he should be in better health. He gave them an insight into the secrets and tricks usually resorted to successfully in cases like theirs.

The consultation cost forty francs.

When they were in the street Cora said, angrily looking toward the future: “Well, I’m well mated!”

He was silent. He was a prey to all sorts of fears, and weighed each word the doctor had said. Had the latter not deceived him? Had he perceived that there was no hope for him? He did not care a fig for the heritage and the child! His life was in danger!

He thought he heard a whistling sound in his lungs and his heart beat furiously. As they crossed the Tuileries garden, he became weak and wanted to sit down. His wife stood up beside him to humiliate him all the more. He breathed heavily, exaggerating the abnormal manner of breathing due to his emotions; he even counted the beats of his pulse.

Cora stamped with impatience and said: “Are you ever going to stop this farce? Are you ready?” He rose as would have done some persecuted victim and continued his way without saying a word.

When Cachelin learned the result of the consultation, his wrath was beyond control. He bawled: “Well, that’s too much! We’re beautifully fixed now!” And he looked at his son-in-law as if he was going to devour him.

Lesable did not pay attention to them; he was preoccupied with his health only. They could shout, but what he was worried about was his health, his life.

He had his various prescriptions placed near him at the table, and he took his medicine faithfully, amid the smiles of his wife and the loud sneering laughter of his father-in-law. He was constantly looking at his reflection in the mirror, timing the beats of his pulse, and even had a bed set up for him in a dark room, so as not to be in carnal contact with his wife.

He experienced now for his wife a sort of appeased hatred, mingled with contempt and disgust. All women at present appeared to him in the light of dangerous beasts, monsters, whose mission was to destroy men; and he no longer thought of Aunt Charlotte's will except as one recalls an accident that might have proved fatal.

Some months passed. Only a year was left before the fatal term.

Cachelin had hung up in the dining-room a huge calendar from which he tore a number each day; and, raging at his helplessness, in despair at feeling that this fortune was slipping out of his hands, furious at the thought that he would have to keep up his drudgery and then retire on two thousand francs a year, he gave vent to his feelings, which were not far from exciting him to the wildest and most violent acts.

He could not see Lesable without wishing to crush, smother, and trample upon him. His hatred was beyond measure. Every time his son-in-law opened the door it seemed to him that a thief was entering the house—a thief who had robbed him of

a sacred family inheritance. He hated him worse than a mortal enemy, despising him for his weakness, above all for his cowardice, since he had given up the fight upon which all their hopes depended, for fear of his health.

Lesable lived as completely apart from his wife as if no tie united them. He never approached or touched her, avoided her look as much through shame as through fear.

Cachelin asked his daughter every day:

“ Well, did your husband make up his mind? ”

She answered: “ No, father.”

Every evening, at table, the family quarrels became more bitter. Cachelin repeated constantly: “ When a man is not a man, it would be fairer for him to give up his place to another.”

And Cora added: “ The fact is that certain people are of no use; they are simply burdens.”

Lesable absorbed his prescriptions and made no reply. One day his father-in-law said: “ If you do not pick up soon I know what my daughter will do.”

The son-in-law raised his eyes, foreseeing some new outrage. Cachelin went on: “ She’ll take some one else. And you are mighty lucky she hasn’t done so already. When one has married a titmouse everything is excusable.”

Lesable became livid and answered: “ Do not let me stand in the way of her following your good advice.”

Cora turned her eyes away. And Cachelin remained somewhat confused, for he readily saw that he had gone a little too far.

PART VI

At the ministry the two men seemed to live on fairly agreeable terms. They had tacitly agreed, no doubt, to keep their discord secret. They addressed each other as "my dear Cachelin"—"my dear Lesable"—and even pretended to joke together, to live happily and contented with their life in common.

Lesable and Maze were very polite and tactful toward one another, like two men who had almost had a fight. The duel they had escaped established between them very exaggerated polite relations, a certain mutual esteem, and, perhaps, too, a secret desire for a reconciliation, for fear of some renewal of the affair. People observed them and admired them for their very refined and reserved attitude toward one another.

They bowed to each other in a very dignified manner.

But they did not speak. Neither cared to be the first to do so.

But one day Lesable was in a hurry and involuntarily rushed into some one coming from an opposite direction. It was Maze. The former immediately inquired, with anxiety: "Did I hurt you?"

The other answered: "Not at all."

Ever since that they deemed it proper to exchange a few words whenever they met. They now vied with each other in courtesy and eagerness to oblige one another. This gave rise to an intimacy which was only tempered by a certain reserve, such as exists between people who have been mis-

taken in one another; and soon a comradeship was established.

And they would frequently gossip together in the order clerk's office. Lesable had cast aside his haughty airs, and Maze no longer flaunted his social successes; Cachelin joined in their conversation, apparently highly pleased with their renewal of friendship. Sometimes, after the handsome clerk had left the room, he would say to his son-in-law: "That's a fine-looking chap."

One morning, while they were all four in the order clerk's room, for Savon never left his copying, the latter's chair, whose legs had been sawed, collapsed under him, and the poor fellow rolled on the floor uttering cries of affright.

The other three sprang to his assistance. He attributed this mishap to the machinations of the Communists, and Maze insisted upon seeing the wounded part. Cachelin and he wanted to undress the old man, to dress the wound they said. But he made a desperate resistance, vociferating that he was unhurt.

When the general mirth had settled down, Cachelin said: "Say, Maze, why don't you come to dine with us some Sunday, now that we're good friends? We should be pleased. Will you?"

Lesable added his entreaty, but more coldly than his father-in-law: "Do come, we should be so pleased."

Maze hesitated, embarrassed by all the rumors which had been spread about, the remembrance of which made him smile even now.

Cachelin urged him: "Do you accept?"

"Yes, I accept!"

When her father announced: "Monsieur Maze

is to dine with us Sunday," Cora was surprised and could only stammer: "Monsieur Maze? Indeed!"

She blushed very deeply, almost unconsciously. She had heard so much said of him, of his manners, his successes, because he was reputed to be quite irresistible with the women, that she had long felt a desire to know him.

Cachelin said, rubbing his hands: "You'll see what a fine-looking, stalwart fellow he is. He's not like your husband!"

She remained silent, a little confused, as if they guessed that she had dreamed of him.

The dinner was very carefully prepared, as much so as the first one for Lesable formerly. Cachelin discussed the dishes, wishing to have everything flawless, and he seemed gayer, reassured by some secret and sure hope, just as if a certain confidence, still undetermined and vague, had filled his heart all of a sudden.

Cachelin spent that Sunday morning in keeping an eye on the preparations for the dinner, while Lesable was working at some urgent affair, whose papers he had brought home the night before. It was the first week of November, and the new year was at hand.

At seven o'clock Maze put in an appearance in the best of spirits. He entered quite familiarly and offered Cora a huge bouquet, which he accompanied with a compliment. He spoke with the easy manner of a man of the world: "It seems to me that I know you a little, and that my acquaintance dates back to your young girlhood, for I have heard much about you for many years."

Cachelin, perceiving the flowers, said: "That's

quite refined." And the daughter remembered that Lesable had not brought a bouquet on the occasion of his first visit. The handsome clerk laughed heartily as if among old friends, and bestowed upon Cora the most delicate compliments, which brought the color to her cheeks.

He thought her most desirable. She found him quite seductive. When he was gone, Cachelin asked: "Well, isn't he fine? What a rascal! They say he's a lady-killer."

Cora was less expansive, but she acknowledged that he was agreeable, and not so much of a dandy as she had imagined.

Lesable admitted that he had not judged Maze fairly at first.

Maze returned a few times after that, and his visits soon became more and more frequent. Everybody liked him. Cora prepared his favorite dishes, and the three men became inseparable. The new friend procured the family press tickets for the different theaters.

They walked home through the crowded streets to the Lesable home. Maze and Cora went ahead, keeping step, hip to hip, swinging with the same rhythm, like two creatures born to walk side by side in life. They spoke together in low tones and laughed softly; and the young woman would often glance back at her father and husband.

Cachelin looked at the pair benevolently and often, without considering he was talking to his son-in-law, declared: "They make a fine couple." Lesable answered quietly: "They're of the same height." He was happy now that his heart beat less fast, that he was not out of breath every time he ran, and that he was stronger all around; his

grudge against his father-in-law, whose coarse jokes had ceased, was also disappearing.

On New Year's Day he was promoted to the chief clerkship. He was so elated over it that he kissed his wife for the first time in six months. She was confused, as if he had done something improper; she looked at Maze, who had come to wish her a happy new year. The latter was also embarrassed, and he looked out of the window, as one who did not wish to see.

But Cachelin soon became irritated and ill-humored again, and harassed his son-in-law with a renewal of his former coarse jokes. Sometimes he even attacked Maze, whom he rendered responsible for the catastrophe which hung over them and the inevitable date of which was rapidly approaching.

March was there and all hope seemed to have vanished, for it would be three years this July since Aunt Charlotte's death.

Spring was early this year. Maze suggested that they all go to the country to pick violets.

They took an early train and stopped at Maison-Laffitte. A winter breeze was blowing in between the bare twigs, but the green turf was spotted with white and blue flowers; and the fruit trees on the hillsides seemed garlanded with roses as their bare branches peered through the clustering bushes.

The Seine, melancholy and muddy from the last rainfall, flowed in between its frost-bitten banks; and the whole country around seemed to have been steeped in a bath, and it exhaled a savor of sweet humidity under the warmth of the first days of spring.

They wandered in the park. Cachelin was glum and more downcast than usual, as he thought bit-

terly of their future disaster. Lesable, morose also, was afraid of getting his feet wet, while Maze and Cora were gathering flowers for a bouquet. Cora for the past few days seemed to be suffering, pale and always tired.

She was soon fatigued and requested to return for luncheon. They came upon a little restaurant near an old ruined mill, and the traditional repast of Parisians on a lark was soon served under a green arbor, on the wooden table covered with two napkins, right near the river.

They had just had some fish and some roast beef when Cora hurriedly rose from the table and ran toward the river, holding her napkin over her mouth.

Lesable asked anxiously: "What's the matter with her?" Maze was troubled, and answered blushing: "I am sure I don't know . . . she was all right a little while ago!"

Cachelin stood there startled, holding his fork in his hand with a bit of salad fluttering on the end of it.

He tried to catch sight of his daughter. Bending a little to the side, he saw his daughter leaning against a tree. A suspicion shot through his mind; he faltered, staggered, and fell back on his chair, leaving the other two men more confused than before. He stared at them with an anxious eye, not daring to speak, wild with anguish and hope.

A quarter of an hour went by in a very deep silence. And Cora came back slowly, slightly pale. No one questioned her in a decisive manner; each seemed to have a presentiment of a happy event, difficult to mention. Cachelin alone asked her:

"Are you better now?" She answered: "Yes, but it wasn't anything. Let us go home early; I have a headache."

And on the way back she took her husband's arm as if to signify something mysterious which she dared not yet avow.

Maze left them at the railroad station, saying he had to do a very important errand, which he had forgotten for a moment.

As soon as Cachelin was alone with the couple he inquired: "What was the matter with you?"

Cora did not reply at first; then, after a moment's hesitation, she said: "Nothing. Just a little heartburn."

She walked languidly with a smile upon her lips. Lesable was uncomfortable; his mind was ill at ease, haunted with confused and contradictory ideas, full of desire for luxury, of stifled wrath, of unspeakable shame, of jealous cowardice—he kept quiet like a person half asleep who does not wish to see the sun pouring into the room and casting a ray on the bed.

As soon as they were home, he retired.

Then Cachelin put both hands on his daughter's shoulders and said: "Tell me, are you enceinte?"

She stammered: "Yes, I think so, for two months."

She was not through speaking before he was leaping with joy; and he began to dance around her. He lifted his legs in spite of his partly stomach and shook the whole floor. The furniture jostled, the glasses rattled on the buffet; and the lamp began to oscillate.

Then he caught his daughter in his arms and kissed her frantically and said to her: "Well, you've succeeded. Did you tell your husband?"

She murmured timidly: "No . . . I . . . was waiting——"

But Cachelin said: "All right . . . it troubles you. . . . I'll do it."

He rushed into his son-in-law's apartment. Seeing him enter, the other rose. But the father-in-law did not give him time to say a word: "You know your wife is *enceinte*?"

The husband was dumfounded, and lost his composure: "What, Cora? How? You say——"

"That's what I say; do you hear? Oh, what luck!"

And he was overjoyed, shook hands with Lesable, complimented him, as if to thank him. "Ah, well! we've succeeded, after all. Just think, the money is ours!" He took him in his arms, in his joyous rapture.

He shouted: "More than a million! just think, over a million!" He began to dance around again, but suddenly stopped to exclaim: "Come on, she's waiting for you. Come kiss her, at least!" And he rushed him off into Cora's room. She was anxious and eager to listen to what was going on in the other room.

As soon as she perceived her husband she staggered back, choked by a strong emotion. He stood there before her, pale and tortured. He looked like a judge and she like a culprit.

Then he said: "It seems you are in a delicate situation?"

She stammered: "It looks so."

Her father brought their heads together, shout-

ing: "Kiss each other, for goodness' sake! It's certainly worth the trouble."

When he had let them go, he declared in his great joy: "That game is won. Say, Lesable, we'll buy a country seat immediately, so you can recuperate there."

This startled Lesable. But the other continued: "We'll invite Torchebeuf with his wife, and as he is about at the end of his career, you may step into his shoes. It's a beginning."

Lesable saw this, just as Cachelin was depicting it to him; he saw himself giving a reception to the chief in front of a beautiful white mansion on the banks of a river. He wore a panama and a white flannel suit.

A certain warmth entered his heart at this new-born hope, and he was appeased, feeling much healthier, he thought, all of a sudden.

He smiled quietly.

Cachelin continued dreaming aloud: "Who knows but we may become influential in the village? You may become deputy. At any rate, we'll be able to hold receptions and invite our neighbors. You'll have a horse and pony chaise to go to the station in every day."

Images of luxury, elegance, and comfort filled Lesable's mind. The thought that he would be the rich man he had so often envied determined his satisfaction. He could not help saying: "Ah, that's delightful, really it is."

Cora, who saw he was won over, smiled in a contented and tender manner; and Cachelin, who saw the way clear to the million now, said: "We must celebrate and dine at the restaurant."

They were slightly tipsy when they reached

home, and Lesable was unable to go to his dark bedchamber. He fell, perhaps by mistake, perhaps by a certain forgetfulness, into his wife's bed. And the bed seemed to roll and pitch all night. He was even seasick.

He was very much surprised on awakening to find Cora in his arms.

She opened her eyes, smiled, and kissed him with a sudden impulse, full of affection and gratitude. Then she said tenderly: "If you want to be very nice you won't go to the ministry to-day. You needn't be very exact now that we're rich. And we'd go to the country, both of us, all alone."

He felt comfortable and happy in the warmth of the bed. He felt like staying there for a very long time, like doing nothing but live in this enchanting ease. A hitherto unknown need of laziness paralyzed him body and soul. One thought only haunted him agreeably: he was going to be rich, independent.

But suddenly he was seized by a fearful doubt that came to him like a thunderbolt, and he replied: "Are you really *enceinte*?"

She reassured him on that score: "Oh, yes! I am sure I am not mistaken."

He had to make sure for himself in order to be thoroughly convinced. Still, he declared: "They may contest your right to the inheritance, because the child will not be born before the appointed date."

This supposition angered her. No, indeed; there would be no contesting after all her anxiety and worry. Not by any means. She was upset, indignant.

"Let us go to the notary," she said.

First, they decided to obtain a certificate from the doctor. They then returned to Doctor Lefilleul.

He at once recognized them, and inquired: "Well, you succeeded?"

They both blushed, and Cora, losing a little of her self-possession, stuttered: "I think so, Monsieur."

The doctor rubbed his hands, exclaiming: "I knew it. I expected it. What I told you was right; it never fails, unless one of the parties is radically impotent."

After the examination, he exclaimed: "Hurrah, it is true!"

He wrote on a sheet of paper the following words: "I, the undersigned, doctor of medicine, graduate of the Faculty of Paris, certify that Madame Léopold Lesable, *née* Cachelin, presents all the symptoms of pregnancy, dating from the neighborhood of three months."

Then, turning to Lesable, he said: "What about yourself? How are your lungs and heart?" He found him perfectly sound now.

They went away happy and contented, arm in arm. On the way to the notary's, an idea struck him: "Suppose you arrange your figure a little so that it will be more striking. He will not think we're trying to gain time."

They went home and he undressed her to help her assume the proper deceptive proportions. He tried the scheme in ten different manners, each time inspecting his work from a distance to make sure it was just right in appearance.

The notary received them with much kindness. He listened to their explanation, and ran over the certificate rapidly, while Lesable said: "Besides,

you can readily see it yourself." He was thoroughly convinced upon looking at Cora's figure.

They anxiously waited for his answer; the man of law then declared: "Certainly. As the child is living, it makes no difference whether it is actually born or is about to be. We'll then suspend the execution of the testament until the *accouchement* of Madame."

They kissed each other on the stairs, so vehement was their joy.

PART VII

From the date of this happy discovery the three relatives lived in perfect harmony. They were joyous, kind, and tolerating. Cachelin had resumed his old joviality, and Cora overwhelmed her husband with kindness. Lesable himself seemed to be another man, always in good spirits, such as he had never been before.

Maze came less often and no longer felt at home among them; he was still received politely, but with more reserve, for happiness is selfish and excludes strangers.

Cachelin himself seemed to be secretly hostile to the handsome clerk whom he had a few months previous introduced with such enthusiasm. It was he who announced the great news to Maze. He said it almost brusquely: "You know my daughter is *enceinte!*"

Maze feigned surprise, and replied: "Well, you're satisfied, then."

Cachelin answered: "Of course," and he noticed his colleague did not appear over elated. Men

do not care to see the women they love in this condition, whether it is due to themselves or not.

Maze, however, dined there every Sunday evening. But the conversation lagged, although there had not been a sign of open antipathy between them; and this embarrassment increased as the weeks glided by. One evening, just after his departure, Cachelin exclaimed moodily: "That fellow is beginning to grate on my nerves!"

And Lesable joined in: "The fact is that there is not much to him, when you know him well." Cora lowered her eyes. She was now uncomfortable in his presence; he seemed to be ashamed before her, no longer smiled at her and offered theater tickets; in fact, it looked as if they could not bear this intimacy which formerly had been so cordial, and it became an unutterable bore to all concerned.

But one Thursday Cora kissed her husband's whiskers more affectionately than usual as she whispered: "You're going to scold me, perhaps."

"Why?"

"Well. . . . Maze came to see me a little while ago, and as I do not wish to be gossiped about, I asked him never to come unless you were there. He was vexed."

Lesable asked in surprise:

"What did he say?"

"Not much, but it didn't suit me, so I told him to put an end to his visits entirely. You know that I did not introduce him here; it was you and father. So I was afraid you might not be pleased."

A grateful joy filled his heart:

"You did right, and I thank you for it."

She added, to regulate the situation between the two men as she had planned it ahead of time:

“ At the office you’ll act just the same as formerly; only he will not come here any more.”

Lesable took his wife into his arms tenderly, and kissed her upon the cheeks and eyelids. He reiterated: “ You’re an angel!” He felt the child throbbing against him as he pressed her to his breast.

PART VIII

Nothing extraordinary took place until the date of her confinement.

Cora gave birth to a little girl toward the last days of September. She was called Désirée; but as they were bent upon having an elaborate and solemn baptism, they decided to wait until they had purchased the country home they had dreamed so much about formerly.

They chose it at Asnières, on the hills that overlooked the Seine.

Great events took place that winter. As soon as they had inherited the money Cachelin applied for and obtained his retirement. He spent his time carving wood, mostly covers of cigar boxes, with the aid of a scroll-saw. He insisted upon showing his work to every one, and expected it to be highly admired.

In his admiration for his own work, he would exclaim: “ What astonishing things can be done!”

The assistant chief, M. Rabout, was dead, so Lesable fulfilled the duties of his place, without holding the title as yet, because the requisite time had not elapsed since his last promotion.

Cora had become another woman, more reserved

and more elegant, having instinctively divined all the transformations which wealth imposes.

On New Year's Day she made a visit to the chief's wife, and was so charming and seductive in asking her to be the godmother of her child that Madame Torchebeuf accepted. Cachelin was to be godfather.

The ceremony took place on a splendid Sunday in June. All the employees of the bureau were invited, except the handsome Maze, who was very reserved at present.

At nine o'clock Lesable was at the station waiting for his principal guest, while a groom, in a livery with great gilt buttons, was holding the bridle of a plump pony in front of a brand-new carriage.

Monsieur Torchebeuf alighted from a first-class coach, with his wife dressed up in a stunning fashion, while Pitolet and Boissel came out of a compartment of a second-class coach. They did not dare invite Father Savon, but it had been arranged that he would be met as if by chance and invited with the consent of the chief.

Lesable ran over to his superior, who was approaching, looking very small in a frock-coat upon the lapel of which shone a decoration like a large red rose in full bloom. His enormous head, surmounted by a large-brimmed hat, made him look like a phenomenon; and his wife, by raising herself ever so little on the tip of her toes, could look over his head.

Léopold was radiant, constantly thanking and bowing to his guests. Then he rushed to his colleagues, begging to be excused for not taking them over in his carriage, as it was too small, and he directed: "Follow the quay, and you'll strike the

Villa Désirée, the fourth after the turn of the road. That's my villa."

And, jumping into the carriage, he seized the reins and drove off, while the groom leaped lightly on the back seat.

The ceremony went on very smoothly. Then they had luncheon. Each guest found a present under his napkin, in proportion to his importance. The godmother received a bracelet of solid gold; her husband, a stick-pin with a ruby in it; Boissel, a portfolio of Russian leather; and Pitolet, a meer-schaum pipe. It was Désirée's present to her new friends, they said.

Madame Torchebeuf blushed with pleasure and confusion and put on the brilliant circle, while the chief, who wore a bow tie, stuck the pin under his decoration, like another one of inferior order.

Through the window a large ribbon-like river could be seen plainly, as it wended its way to Suresnes. The sun fell upon the water, making it look like an enflamed river. The repast at first was solemn, owing to the presence of Monsieur and Madame Torchebeuf. Then a little gayety crept in. Cachelin risked a few of his coarse jokes; now that he was rich every one thought them proper and laughed.

Pitolet and Boissel could not have proffered them, for, on their part, they would have been deemed shocking.

At dessert the child was brought in to be kissed by every one. Submerged in a labyrinth of laces, it looked at the people with its wide blue eyes, vague and thoughtless, and it turned its large head, in which a beginning of attention could already be distinguished.

Pitolet, in the confusion of the voices, whispered into Boissel's ear: "It looks like a Mazette."

The word went around the ministry the next day.

It was now about two. Cachelin proposed to do the honors of the place and then take them for a walk on the banks of the Seine.

Then it was a procession through the house, from the garret to the cellar; next it was a skirmish from tree to tree, plant to plant, and they disbanded for the promenade.

Cachelin, somewhat held back and intimidated by the presence of the ladies, drew Boissel and Pitolet into a café on the bank of the river, while Mesdames Torchebeuf and Lesable, with their husbands, walked on the other bank, away from the noisy Sunday crowd. They walked slowly, with their husbands following them, talking about the affairs of the ministry.

On the river boats glided by, pushed along by vigorous strokes of young men's strong arms. The women steered, protected from the sun by silk parasols of different colors. Shouts, calls, and curses were exchanged from one boat to another; a distant clamor of human voices, confused and drawling, indicated that somewhere around a joyous crowd was swarming.

Fishing lines were strewed along the banks, while almost naked swimmers were diving from heavy boats into the river.

Madame Torchebeuf looked upon the scene with evident surprise. Cora said: "That is the way it is every Sunday. It spoils the charm for me."

A canoe came up slowly. Two women were rowing, with two men lying in the bottom of the

boat. One of them shouted: "See here, honest women! I have a man to sell, cheap. Do you want him?"

Cora turned her head away contemptuously, saying to her guest: "Let us go elsewhere; these women are too infamous!"

And they went away. Monsieur Torchebeuf was saying: "It's sure. On the first day of the year. The director promised me to do it."

Lesable was saying: "Oh, I don't know how to thank you, dear master."

When they arrived at the house they found Cachelin, Boissel, and Pitolet laughing to tears almost, and carrying Old Man Savon, whom they had met with a woman, they said.

The old fellow was protesting: "That's not true. No, it is not. That's not right to do that, Monsieur Cachelin; no, it is not!"

And Cachelin laughed very loud: "Oh, you rascal! You called her your little duckling. We've got you, you bad old boy."

The ladies themselves smiled at his discomfiture.

Cachelin exclaimed: "With Monsieur Torchebeuf's permission we'll keep him prisoner for dinner?"

The chief kindly consented. And the joke was kept up about the abandoned lady, much to Savon's bashful grief. He was upset about this farce.

This furnished the conversation for the whole evening.

Cora and Madame Torchebeuf watched the sunset. The sun threw purple reflections among the leaves. Not the slightest breeze moved the branches; a serene calmness pervaded all and everything.

A few boats passed by now and then.

Cora asked: "It is said that the poor Savon married a wretch of a woman?"

Madame Torchebeuf, well informed on all subjects, volunteered: "Yes, an orphan, far too young for him, who left him for a younger worthless fellow." The stout lady added: "I say he is no good, and yet I have no proof of it. They say it was a love match; at all events, Savon himself is not seductive."

Madame Lesable replied: "That is not an excuse. Our neighbor, Monsieur Barbon, is in the same boat. His wife fell in love with a painter and ran away with him. I don't know how a woman can lower herself to that extent. Women of that kind should suffer a special punishment for bringing such shame on a family."

At the other side of the alley Désirée appeared, carried by her nurse. The child was approaching the two women, all pink in the reddish-gold tint of the evening. It stared at the fiery sky with the same calm, serene look that it cast upon the people around it.

All the men approached her; and Cachelin took his granddaughter in his arms and elevated her as if he were about to send her into the heavens. Her profile could be seen against the brilliant background, while her long skirts hung almost to the ground.

The grandfather exclaimed: "That's the only true happiness, old Savon, isn't it?"

The old man did not answer, having nothing to say or else too much to think about.

A servant opened the door and announced:

"Madame is served."



THE TRIP OF LE HORLA



N the morning of July 8th I received the following telegram: "Fine day. Always my predictions. Belgium boundary line. Material and personnel left at noon for the social seat. Beginning of maneuvers at three. Therefore I will wait for you at the works from five o'clock on. "Jovis."

At five o'clock sharp I entered the works of La Villette. It might be said that these were the colossal ruins of an old town inhabited by Cyclops, cut by enormous and dark avenues in the middle of heavy gasometers standing one behind another, like monstrous columns, unequally high and, undoubtedly, in the past, some tremendous iron building.

The balloon was lying in the courtyard and had the appearance of a cake made of yellow cloth, flat-

tened on the ground under a rope. That is called placing a balloon in a sweep-net, and, in fact, it appeared like an enormous fish.

Two or three hundred people were looking at it, sitting or standing, and some were examining the basket, a nice little square basket for a human cargo, bearing on its side in gold letters on a mahogany plate the words: *Le Horla*.

Suddenly the people began to stand back, for the gas was beginning to enter the big balloon through a long tube of yellow cloth, which lay on the soil, undulating like an enormous worm. But another thought, another image, monopolized eyes and brain. It is thus that nature itself nourishes beings from their birth. The creature that will rise soon begins to move, and the attendants of Captain Jovis, as *Le Horla* grew larger, spread and put in place the net which covers it, so that the pressure will be regular and equally distributed at every point.

The operation is very delicate and very important, for the resistance of the cotton cloth of which the balloon is made is figured not in proportion to the contact surface of this cloth with the net, but in proportion to the links of the basket.

Le Horla, moreover, has been designed by M. Mallet, constructed under his own eyes and made by himself. Everything had been made in the shops of M. Jovis, and nothing was bought from outsiders.

We must add that everything was new in this balloon, from the varnish to the valve, those two essential parts of a balloon. Both must render the cloth gas-proof, as the sides of a ship are water-proof. The old varnishes, made with a base of linseed oil, sometimes fermented and thus burned

the cloth, which in a short time would tear like a piece of paper.

The valves offer the danger of closing hermetically or imperfectly after being opened. The fall of M. L'Hoste in the open sea during the night proved the imperfection of the old system.

The two discoveries of Captain Jovis, the varnish principally, are of inestimable value in the art of ballooning.

The crowd has begun to talk, and some men, who appear to be specialists, affirm with authority that we shall alight before the fortifications. Several other things have been criticised in this novel type of balloon, with which we are about to experiment with so much pleasure and success.

It grows slowly but surely. Some small holes and scratches made in transit have been discovered, and we cover them and plug them with a little piece of paper applied on the cloth while wet. This method of repairing alarms and mystifies the public.

While Captain Jovis and his assistants are busy with the last details, the travelers go to dine in the canteen of the gas-works, according to the established custom.

When we come out again the balloon is balancing, enormous and transparent, a prodigious golden fruit, a fantastic pear which has ripened, covered by the last rays of the setting sun. Now the basket is attached, the barometers are brought, the fog-horn, which we will blow to our hearts' content, is also brought, and the two trumpets, the eatables, the overcoats and raincoats, all the little material that will go with the men in that flying basket.

As the wind pushes the balloon against the gaso-

meters, it is necessary, several times, to steady it to avoid an accident at the start.

Captain Jovis now is ready and calls all the passengers.

Lieutenant Mallet jumps aboard, climbing first on the aerial net between the basket and the balloon, from which he will watch during the night the movement of *Le Horla* across the skies, as the officer on watch, standing on starboard, watches the course of a ship.

M. Etienne Beer gets in after him, then comes M. Paul Bessand, then M. Patrice Eyries, and I got in last.

But the basket is too heavy for the balloon, considering the long trip to be taken, and M. Eyries must quit his place, not without great regret.

M. Joliet, standing erect on the edge of the basket, begs the ladies, in very gallant terms, to stand aside a little, for he is afraid he might throw sand on their hats in rising; then he orders: "Let it go," and, cutting with one stroke of his knife the ropes that hold the balloon to the ground, he gives *Le Horla* its liberty.

In one second we fly skyward. Nothing can be heard; we float, we rise, we fly, we glide. Our friends shout with glee and applaud, but we hardly hear them, we hardly see them. We are already so far, so high! What? Are we really leaving those people down there? Is that possible? Paris is readily seen now, stretching under us, like a dark spot, almost blue, cut by its streets, from which spring now and then domes, towers, steeples, then the plains, the soil, which is cut by long lines, thin and white in the middle of green fields, a green shading of a darker hue, and woods almost black.

The Seine appears like a coiled snake, asleep, of which we see neither head nor tail; it crosses Paris, and the entire field resembles an immense basin of prairies and forests dotted here and there by mountains, hardly visible in the horizon.

The sun, which we cannot see any more, spreads its rays as if it were about to rise again, and our balloon seems to be lighted; it must appear like a star to the people who are looking up. M. Mallet every second throws a cigarette paper into space and says quietly: "We are rising, always rising;" while Captain Jovis, radiant with joy, rubs his hands together and repeats: "Eh? this varnish? Isn't it good?"

In fact, we can see whether we are rising or sinking only by throwing a cigarette paper out of the basket now and then. If this paper appears to fall down like a stone, it means that the balloon is rising; if it appears to shoot skyward the balloon is descending.

The two barometers mark about five hundred meters, and we regard with enthusiastic admiration the land we are leaving, to which we are not attached any more; it appears like a geographical map painted here and there, as if it were a plan of a province. All its noise, however, rises to our ears very distinctly, easily recognizable. We hear the sound of the wheels rolling in the streets, the snap of a whip, the cries of drivers, the rolling and whistling of trains, and the laughter of small boys running after one another. Every time we pass over a village, the noise made by the street urchins is the dominant note, and rises skyward with a wonderful clarity. Some men are calling us; the locomotives whistle; we answer with the fog-horn, which

emits plaintive groans, loud and fearfully shrill, resembling the voice of a fantastic being wandering over the world.

We perceive some lights here and there, some isolated fire in the farms, and a line of gas-lamps appearing like fantastic beings in the towns. We are going toward the northwest, after roaming for some time over the little lake of D'Enghien. Now we see a river; it is the Oise, and we begin to argue about the exact spot we are passing. Is that town Creil or Pontoise—the one with so many lights? But if we were over Pontoise we could see the junction of the Seine and the Oise; and that enormous fire to the left, isn't it the high furnaces of Montataire? Then we are over Creil. The view is superb; it is dark on the ground, but we are still in the light, and it is now past ten o'clock. Now we begin to hear some slight noises from the fields, above all the double whistle of the quail, then the mewing of cats and the barking of dogs. Surely, the dogs have scented the balloon, they have seen it, and have given the alarm. We can hear them barking all over the plain and making the identical noise they make when bay-ing the moon. The cows also seem to wake up in the barns, for we can hear them lowing; but all the beasts are scared and moved before the aerial monster that is passing.

The delicious odors of the soil rise toward us, odors of hay, of flowers, of green and wet prairies, perfuming the air—a light air, in fact, so light, so sweet, so delightful, that I realize I never was so fortunate as to breathe before. A profound sense of well-being, unknown to me heretofore, took hold of me, a well-being of the body and of the spirit, composed of nonchalance, of infinite rest, of forgetful-

ness, of indifference to everything, and of the novel sensation of traversing space without feeling the effects which render unbearable the rocking of the balloon, without noise, without starts, and without trepidations.

We are now rising, now descending. Minute after minute Lieutenant Mallet, suspended in his cobweb of cloth, says to Captain Jovis: "We are descending; throw down half a handful." And the Captain, who is talking and laughing with us, with a bag of ballast between his legs, takes a handful of sand out of the bag and throws it overboard.

Nothing is more amusing, more delicate, more interesting than the maneuvering of a balloon. It is an enormous toy, free and docile, which obeys with a surprising sensibility, but it is also, and before all, the slave of the wind, which we cannot control. A pinch of sand, half a sheet of paper, one or two drops of water, the bones of a chicken which we had just eaten, thrown overboard, make it go up quickly.

From the river or the woods we are traversing emanates a very cold and damp air, which makes the balloon descend two hundred meters. It maintains the same altitude when passing over fields of ripe corn, and it rises when passing over towns.

The earth sleeps now, or, rather, men sleep on the earth, for the beasts awakened by the sight of our balloon announce our approach everywhere. Now and then the rolling of a train or the whistling of a locomotive is plainly distinguishable. We sound our fog-horn as we pass over the inhabited places; and the peasants, terrified in their beds, must tremble and ask themselves if this is doomsday.

A strong and continuous odor of gas can be plainly observed. We must have encountered a current of warm air, and the balloon swells up, losing its invisible blood by the escape-valve, which is called the appendix, and which closes of itself as soon as the expansion ceases.

We are rising. The earth no longer returns the echo of our trumpets; we have risen almost two thousand feet. It is not light enough for us to be able to consult the instruments; we only know that the rice-paper falls from us like dead butterflies, that we are rising, always rising. We can no longer see the earth; a light mist separates us from it; and above our head twinkles a world of stars.

A silvery light appears before us and makes the sky turn pale; suddenly the moon appears, as if it were rising from unknown depths behind the horizon below us. It seems to be coming from below, while we are looking down upon it from a great height, leaning on the edge of our basket like an audience on a balcony. Clear and round, it emerges from the clouds and slowly rises in the sky.

The earth no longer seems to exist; it is bathed in milky vapors that resemble a sea. We are now alone in space with the moon, which looks like another balloon traveling opposite us; and our balloon, which shines in the air, appears like another, larger moon, a world wandering in the sky amid the stars, through infinity. We no longer speak, think, or live; we float along through space in delicious inertia. The air which is carrying us has made of us all beings which resemble it, silent, joyous, and mad, intoxicated by this strange flight, peculiarly alert, although motionless. One can no longer feel flesh nor blood; the heart seems to have ceased beating;

we have become something inexpressible, birds who do not even have to flap their wings.

All memory has disappeared from our minds, all trouble from our thoughts; we have no more regrets, plans, nor hopes. We look, we feel, we wildly enjoy this fantastic journey; nothing in the sky but the moon and ourselves! We are a wandering, traveling world, like our sisters, the planets; and this little world carries five men who have left the earth and who have almost forgotten it. We can now see as plainly as in daylight; we look at each other, surprised at this clearness, for we have nothing to look at but ourselves and a few silvery clouds floating below us. The barometers mark twelve hundred meters, then thirteen, fourteen, fifteen hundred; and the little rice-papers still fall about us.

Captain Jovis claims that the moon has often made balloons act thus, and that the upward journey will continue.

We are now at two thousand meters; we go up to two thousand three hundred and fifty; then the balloon stops. We blow the siren and are surprised that no one answers us from the stars.

We are now going down rapidly. M. Mallet keeps crying: "Throw out more ballast! Throw out more ballast!" And the sand and stones that we throw over come back into our faces, as if they were going up, thrown from below toward the stars, our fall is so rapid.

Here is the earth! Where are we? It is now past midnight, and we are crossing a broad, dry, well-cultivated country, with many roads and well populated.

To the right is a large city, and farther away to the left is another. But suddenly from the earth

appears a bright fairy light; it disappears, reappears, and once more disappears. Jovis, intoxicated by space, exclaims: "Look, look at this phenomenon of the moon in the water. One can see nothing more beautiful at night!"

Nothing indeed can give one an idea of the wonderful brightness of these spots of light which are not fire, which do not look like reflections, which appear quickly here or there and immediately go out again. These shining lights appear on the winding rivers at every turn, but one hardly has time to see them as the balloon passes as quickly as the wind.

We are now quite near the earth, and Beer exclaims: "Look at that! What is that running over there in the fields? Isn't it a dog?" Indeed, something is running along the ground with great speed, and this something seems to jump over ditches, roads, trees with such ease that we could not understand what it could be. The Captain laughed: "It is the shadow of our balloon. It will grow as we descend."

I distinctly hear the great noise of a foundry in the distance. And, according to the polar star, which we have been observing all night, and which I have so often watched and consulted from the bridge of my little yacht on the Mediterranean, we are heading straight for Belgium.

Our siren and our two horns are continually calling. A few cries from some truck-driver or belated reveler answer us. We bellow: "Where are we?" But the balloon is going so rapidly that the bewildered man has not even time to answer us. The growing shadow of *Le Horla*, as large as a child's ball, is fleeing before us over the fields, roads

and woods. It goes along steadily, preceding us by about a quarter of a mile; and now I am leaning out of the basket, listening to the great noise the wind makes in the trees and in the harvests. I say to Captain Jovis: "How the wind blows!"

He answers: "No, those are probably water-falls." I insist, sure of myself, as I well know the sound of the wind, from hearing it so often whistle through my rigging. Then Jovis nudges me; he fears to frighten his happy and calm passengers, for he knows full well that a storm is pursuing us.

At last a man manages to understand us; he answers: "North!" We get the same reply from another.

Suddenly the lights of a town, which seems to be of considerable size, appear before us. Perhaps it is Lille. As we approach it, such a wonderful flow of fire appears below us that I think myself transported into some fairyland where precious stones are manufactured for giants.

It seems that it is a brick factory. Here are others, two, three. The fusing material bubbles, sparkles, throws out blue, red, yellow, green sparks, reflections from giant diamonds, rubies, emeralds, turquoises, sapphires, topazes. And near there great foundries are roaring like apocalyptic lions; high chimneys belch forth their clouds of smoke and flame, and we can hear the noise of metal striking against metal.

"Where are we?"

The voice of some joker, or of some one madened by fear, answers: "In a balloon!"

"Where are we?"

"At Lille!"

We have not been mistaken. We are already out of sight of the town, and we see Roubaix to the right, then some well-cultivated, regular fields, of different colors according to the crops, some yellow, some gray or brown. But the clouds are gathering behind us, hiding the moon, whereas toward the east the sky is growing lighter, becoming a clear blue tinged with red. It is dawn. It grows rapidly, now showing us all the little details of the earth, the trains, the brooks, the cows, the goats. And all that passes below us with a surprising speed. One hardly has time to notice that other fields, other meadows, other houses have already disappeared. Cocks are crowing, but the voice of ducks drowns everything. One might think the world to be peopled, covered with them, they make so much noise.

The early rising peasants are waving their arms and crying to us: "Let yourselves drop!" But we go along steadily, neither rising nor falling, leaning over the edge of the basket and watching the world fleeing under our feet.

Jovis sights another city far off in the distance. It approaches; everywhere are old church spires. They are delightful, seen thus from above. Where are we? Is this Courtrai? Is it Ghent?

We are already very near it, and we see that it is surrounded by water and crossed in every direction by canals. One might think it a Venice of the north. Just as we are passing so near to a church tower that our long guy-rope almost touches it, the chimes begin to ring three o'clock. The sweet, clear sounds rise to us from this frail roof which we have almost touched in our wandering course. It is a charming greeting, a friendly welcome from Hol-

land. We answer with our siren, whose raucous voice echoes throughout the streets.

It was Bruges; but we have hardly lost sight of it when my neighbor, Paul Bessand, asks me: "Don't you see something over there, to the right, in front of us? It looks like a river."

And, indeed, far ahead of us stretches a bright street, in the light of the dawning day. Yes, it looks like a river, an immense river full of islands.

"Get ready for the descent," cried the Captain. He makes M. Mallet leave his net and return to the basket; then we pack the barometers and everything that could be injured by possible shocks. M. Bessand exclaims: "Look at the masts over there to the left! We are at the sea!"

Fogs had hidden it from us until then. The sea was everywhere, to the left and opposite us, while to our right the Scheldt, which had joined the Moselle, stretched toward the sea its mouth, like a vast lake.

It was necessary to descend within a minute or two. The rope to the escape-valve, which had been religiously inclosed in a little white bag and placed in sight of all so that no one would touch it, is unrolled, and M. Mallet holds it in his hand while Captain Jovis looks for a favorable landing.

Behind us the thunder was rumbling and not a single bird followed our mad flight.

"Pull!" cried Jovis.

We were passing over a canal. The basket trembled and tipped over slightly. The guy-rope touched the tall trees on both banks. But our speed is so great that the dragging rope does not seem to slow down, and we pass with frightful rapidity over a large farm, from which the bewildered chickens,

pigeons, and ducks fly away, while the cows, cats, and dogs run, terrified, toward the house.

Just one half bag of ballast is left. Jovis throws it overboard, and *Le Horla* barely grazes the roof.

The Captain once more cries: "The escape-valve!"

M. Mallet reaches for the rope and hangs to it, and we drop like an arrow. With a slash of a knife the cord which retains the anchor is cut, and we drag this grapple behind us, through a wheat-field. Here are the trees.

"Take care! Hold fast! Look out for your heads!"

We pass over them; then a strong shock shakes us. The anchor has taken hold.

"Look out! Take a good hold! Lift yourselves up. We are going to touch ground."

The basket does indeed strike the earth. Then it flies up again. Once more it falls and bounds upward again, and at last it settles on the ground, while the balloon struggles madly, like a wounded beast.

Peasants run toward us, but they do not dare approach. They were a long time before they decided to come and deliver us, for one cannot set foot on the ground until the bag is almost completely deflated.

Almost at the same time as the bewildered men, some of whom showed their astonishment with the wild gestures of savages, all the cows of the neighborhood came toward us, surrounding our balloon by a strange and comical circle of horns, big eyes, and blowing nostrils.

With the help of the accommodating and hospitable Belgian peasants, we were able in a short

time to pack up all our material and carry it to the station at Heyst, where at twenty minutes past eight we took the train for Paris.

The descent occurred at three-fifteen in the morning preceding only by a few seconds the torrent of rain and the blinding lightning of the storm which had been chasing us before it.

Thanks to Captain Jovis, of whom I had heard much from my colleague, Paul Ginisty—for both of them had fallen together, and voluntarily, into the sea opposite Mentone—thanks to this brave man, we were able to see, in a single night, from far up in the sky, the sun set to earth, the moon rise, and the day return, and to go from Paris to the mouth of the Scheldt through the skies.



THE SUNDAYS OF A PARISIAN

CHAPTER I

PREPARATIONS FOR THE EXCURSION



PATISSOT, born in Paris, after having failed in his examinations at the Collège Henri IV, like many others, had entered the government service through the influence of one of his aunts, who kept a tobacco store where the head of one of the departments bought his provisions.

He advanced very slowly, and would, perhaps, have died a four-class clerk without the aid of a kindly Providence, which sometimes watches over our destiny. He is to-day fifty-two years old, and it is only at this age that he is beginning to explore, as a tourist, all that part of France which lies between the fortifications and the Province.

The story of his advance might be useful to many employees, just as the tale of his excursions may be

of value to many Parisians who will take them as a model for their own outings, and will thus, through his example, avoid certain mishaps which occurred to him.

In 1854 he enjoyed a salary of only 1800 francs. Through a peculiar trait of his character he was unpopular with all his superiors, who let him languish in the eternal and hopeless expectations of the clerk's ideal, an increase of salary. Nevertheless, he worked; but he did not know how to make himself appreciated: he had too much self-respect, he claimed. His self-respect consisted in never bowing to his superiors in a low and servile manner, as did, according to him, certain of his colleagues, whom he would not mention. He added that his frankness embarrassed many people, for, like all the rest, he protested against injustice and the favoritism shown to persons entirely foreign to the bureaucracy. But his indignant voice never passed beyond the little cage where he worked.

First as a government clerk, then as Frenchman, and finally as a man of order, he would adhere to whatever government was established, having a holy reverence for power, except for that of his chiefs.

Each time that he got the chance he would place himself where he could see the Emperor pass, in order to have the honor of taking his hat off to him; and he would go away puffed up with pride at having bowed to the head of the State.

From his habit of observing the sovereign he became very much like him; he imitated the way he trimmed his beard or arranged his hair, the cut of his clothes, his walk, his mannerisms. Indeed, how many men in each country seemed to be the living images of the head of the government! Perhaps he

vaguely resembled Napoleon III, but his hair was black; therefore he dyed it, and then the likeness was complete; and when he met another gentleman in the street also imitating the imperial countenance, he was jealous and looked at him disdainfully. This need of imitation soon became his hobby, and, having heard an usher at the Tuileries imitate the voice of the Emperor, he also acquired the same intonations and studied slowness.

He thus became so much like his model that they might easily have been mistaken for each other, and certain high dignitaries were heard to remark that they found it unseemly and even vulgar; the matter was mentioned to the prime minister, who ordered that the employee should appear before him. But at the sight of him he began to laugh and repeated two or three times: "That's funny, really funny!" This was repeated, and the following day Patissot's immediate superior recommended that his subordinate receive an increase of salary of three hundred francs. He received it immediately.

From that time on his promotions came regularly, thanks to his apelike faculty of imitation. The presentiment that some high honor might come to him some day caused his chiefs to speak to him with deference.

When the Republic was proclaimed it was a disaster for him. He felt lost, done for, and, losing his head, he stopped dyeing his hair, shaved himself completely, and had his hair cut short, thus giving him a paternal and benevolent expression which could not cause him any embarrassment.

Then his chiefs took revenge for the long time during which he had imposed upon them, and, having all turned Republican through an instinct of

preservation, they cut down his salary and delayed his promotion. He, too, changed his opinions. But the Republic not being a palpable and living person whom one can resemble, and the presidents succeeding each other with rapidity, he found himself plunged in great embarrassment, in a terrible distress, and, after an unsuccessful attempt toward his last ideal, M. Thiers, he felt himself impeded in his occupation of imitation. He needed a new manifestation of his personality. He searched for a long time; then, one morning, he arrived at the office wearing a new hat which had on the side a small red, white, and blue rosette. His colleagues were astounded; they laughed all that day, the next day, the week, and the month. But the seriousness of his demeanor at last disconcerted them; and once more his superiors became anxious. What mystery could be hidden under this sign? Was it a simple manifestation of patriotism? or an affirmation of his allegiance to the Republic? or, perhaps, the secret sign of some powerful connection? But to wear it so obstinately he must surely have some powerful and hidden protection. It would be well, perhaps, to be on one's guard, especially as he received all pleasantries with unruffled calmness. After that he was treated with respect, and his sham courage saved him; he was appointed head clerk on the first of January, 1880. His whole life had been spent indoors. He hated noise and bustle, and because of this love of rest and quiet he had remained a bachelor. He spent his Sundays reading tales of adventures and carefully arranging transparencies which he afterward offered to his colleagues. In his whole existence he had only taken three vacations of a week each, when he was changing his quarters. But

sometimes, on a holiday, he would leave by an excursion train for Dieppe or Havre, in order to elevate his mind by contact with the imposing scenery of the ocean.

He was full of that common sense which borders on stupidity. For a long time he had been living quietly, with economy, temperate through prudence, chaste by temperament, when suddenly he was assailed by a terrible apprehension. One evening in the street he suddenly felt an attack of dizziness which made him fear a stroke of apoplexy. He hastened to a physician, and for five francs obtained the following prescription:

“M. X——, fifty-five years old, bachelor, clerk. Full-blooded, danger of apoplexy. Cold-water applications, moderate nourishment, plenty of exercise.

“MONTELLIER, M. D.”

Patissot was dazed, and for a whole month, in his office, he kept a wet towel wrapped around his head like a turban while the water continually dripped on his work, which he would have to do over again. Every once in a while he would read the prescription over, probably in the hope of finding some hidden meaning, of penetrating into the secret thought of the physician, and also of discovering some form of exercise which might perhaps make him immune from apoplexy.

Then he consulted his friends, showing them the fateful paper. One advised boxing. He immediately hunted up an instructor, and, on the first day, he received a punch in the nose which immediately took away all his ambition in this direction. Single-stick made him gasp for breath, and he grew so stiff from fencing that for two days and two nights he could not get to sleep. Then a bright idea struck

him. It was to walk, every Sunday, to some suburb of Paris and even to certain places in the capital which he did not know.

For a whole week his mind was occupied with thoughts of the equipment which you need for these excursions; and on Sunday, the thirtieth of May, he began his preparation. After reading all the extraordinary advertisements which poor, blind and halt beggars distribute on the street corners, he began to visit the stores with the intention of looking around only and of buying later on. First of all, he visited a so-called American shoe store, where heavy traveling shoes were shown him. The clerk brought out a kind of ironclad contrivance, studded with spikes like a harrow and which he claimed to be made from Rocky Mountain bison skin. He was so carried away with them that he would willingly have bought two pairs, but one was sufficient. He took it and carried it away under his arm, which soon became numb from the weight. He next invested in a pair of corduroy trousers, such as carpenters wear, and a pair of oiled canvas leggings. Then he needed a knapsack for his provisions, a telescope so as to recognize villages perched on the slope of distant hills, and finally a government survey map to enable him to find his way about without asking the toiling farmers. Lastly, in order more comfortably to stand the heat, he decided to purchase a light alpaca jacket offered by the famous firm of Raminau, according to their advertisements, for the modest sum of six francs and fifty centimes. He went to this store and was welcomed by a distinguished-looking young man with a marvelous head of hair, nails as pink as those of a lady, and a pleasant smile. He showed him the garment. It

did not correspond with the glowing style of the advertisement. Then Patissot hesitatingly asked: "Well, Monsieur, will it wear well?" The young man turned his eyes away in well-feigned embarrassment, like an honest man who does not wish to deceive a customer, and, lowering his eyes, he said in a hesitating manner: "Dear me, Monsieur, you understand that for six francs fifty we cannot turn out an article like this for instance . . ." And he showed him a much finer jacket than the first one. Patissot examined it and asked the price. "Twelve francs fifty." It was very tempting, but before deciding, he once more questioned the big young man, who was observing him attentively. "And—is that good? Do you guarantee it?" "Oh! certainly, Monsieur, it is quite good! But, of course, you must not get it wet! Yes, it's really quite good; but you understand that there are goods and goods. It's excellent for the price. Twelve francs fifty, just think. Why, that's nothing at all. Naturally a twenty-five-franc coat is much better. For twenty-five francs you get a superior quality, as strong as linen, and which wears even better. If it gets wet a little ironing will fix it right up. The color never fades, and it does not turn red in the sunlight. It is the warmest and lightest material out." He unfolded his wares, holding them up, shaking them, crumpling and stretching them in order to show the excellent quality of the cloth. He talked on convincingly, dispelling all hesitation by words and gesture. Patissot was convinced; he bought the coat. The pleasant salesman, still talking, tied up the bundle and continued praising the value of the purchase. When it was paid for he was suddenly silent. He bowed with a superior air, and, holding the door

open, he watched his customer disappear, both arms filled with bundles and vainly trying to reach his hat to bow.

M. Patissot returned home and carefully studied the map; he wished to try on his shoes, which were more like skates than shoes, owing to the spikes. He slipped and fell, promising himself to be more careful in the future. Then he spread out all his purchases on a chair and looked at them for a long time. He went to sleep with this thought: "Isn't it strange that I didn't think before of taking an excursion to the country?"



CHAPTER II

THE FIRST EXCURSION



URING the whole week Patissoot worked without ambition. He was dreaming of the outing which he had planned for the following Sunday, and he was seized by a sudden longing for the country, a desire of growing tender over nature, that thirst for rustic scenes which overwhelms the Parisians in springtime.

Saturday night he went to bed early, and at daybreak he was up. His window opened on a narrow, dark little courtyard, a sort of shaft which served as a flue for all the evil smells of the poor families living on the floors below. He immediately lifted his eye to the square patch of sky which appeared at the top, and he saw that it was already deep blue from the sunlight. Swallows were continually darting over it, but they only

could be seen for a second. He surmised that from up there they ought to be able to see the distant country, the green hills, and the great expanse of the horizon. Then a wild desire came to him to lose himself among the fresh leaves. He dressed quickly, drew on his unwieldy boots, and spent a long time lacing up his gaiters, articles to which he was not accustomed. He filled his knapsack with meat, cheese, and several bottles of wine (for the exercise would undoubtedly make him hungry), and he harnessed it on his back. He took his cane and left.

He started off with a lively, well-regulated step (like that of the soldiers, he thought), and whistling gay tunes which would make the walking easier. People turned around to look at him; a dog barked; a passing coachman called out: "Good luck, Mr. Legs!" But he paid not the least attention to them and walked along briskly, swinging his stick.

The city was awakening joyfully to the warmth and sunlight of a beautiful spring day. The fronts of the houses were shining, canaries were gayly singing in their cages, happiness seemed to be everywhere, on the faces of all was an expression of joy and content.

He was heading for the Seine in order to take the boat for Saint-Cloud. Amid the surprised looks of the passers-by, he followed the Chaussée-d'Antin, the Boulevard, the Rue Royale, mentally comparing himself to the Wandering Jew. On stepping up to the sidewalk the nails in his shoes once more caused him to slip, and he fell down, with a terrible noise, in his haversack. Some people lifted him up and he started out again, more slowly this time. He reached the river and waited for a boat.

He saw it appear under a bridge, in the distance,

seeming very small at first and then growing larger. In his mind it took the proportions of an ocean greyhound, and he felt as though he were leaving for a long journey across the seas to see new people and unknown things. The boat glided up to the landing, and he got on board. Everywhere were people dressed up in their Sunday clothes, women with flashy gowns and gaudy ribbons. Patissot, in order to make people think that he was accustomed to boats, took his position up near the bow and stood there with his legs spread apart like a sailor. But, as he feared the motion of the boat, he leaned on his stick in order not to lose his balance.

After the station of Point-du-Jour, the river broadened out and flowed calmly under the shining sun. Soon the boat passed between two islands and followed a wooded hill covered with little white houses. A voice called out Bas-Meudon, then Sèvres, and lastly Saint-Cloud, and there Patissot debarked.

As soon as he was on the quay he opened his map in order to make no mistake. The way was quite clear: he would take a road to La Celle Saint-Cloud, turn to the left, then again a little to the right, and by following this road he could reach Versailles and visit the park before eating.

The road went up a steep hill, and Patissot was puffing and blowing, weighted down under the heavy bag of provisions, his legs sore from his tightly laced gaiters, and dragging in the dust his thick boots which felt heavier than lead. Suddenly he stopped with a gesture of despair. In his hurried departure he had forgotten his telescope.

At last he saw the woods. Then, notwithstanding the terrific heat, the perspiration which was drip-

ping from him, the weight from his harness, and the jerks of his haversack, he ran, or, rather, trotted, through the grass like a tired old nag.

At last he was in the cool shade, and he felt seized by a sudden tenderness before the multitude of different flowers, yellow, red, blue, purple, slender and dainty, blooming along the wayside at the ends of their long stems. Insects of every color and shape, fat and slim, wonderfully built, terrible and tiny monsters, were wending their troubled way up the tiny blades of grass which bent under their weight. Patissot sincerely admired creation. But, as he was tired out, he sat down.

Then he decided to eat, but when he opened his bag he looked at it in amazement. One of the bottles had broken, probably when he fell, and the liquid, unable to get through the oilcloth, had made a regular wine mush of his large stock of victuals. Nevertheless he managed to clean off and eat a piece of cold lamb and a slice of ham, some soft, red pieces of bread, and to drink some fermented claret, covered with an unappetizing pink foam.

After resting a few hours he once more consulted his map and started on his way.

Soon he found himself at an unexpected cross-road. He looked at the sun, tried to locate himself, thought the matter over, studied all the little lines which crossed the paper and which stood for roads, and soon came to the conclusion that he was absolutely lost.

Before him lay a delightful little valley whose thin foliage allowed little beams of sunlight to strike the earth and light up the pretty daisies hidden in the grass. It stretched out in the distance, deserted and calm. A solitary bumblebee buzzed around,

stopping on a flower and then starting off again, soon to stop on another flower. His enormous body seemed to be made of brown velvet streaked with yellow and carried by transparent wings which appeared to be absurdly small. Patissot was watching it with deep interest, when something moved at his feet. At first he was frightened and jumped aside; then, cautiously leaning over, he noticed a large frog which was taking enormous leaps. He stooped in order to pick it up, but it slipped through his hands. Then, with infinite precautions, he crawled up to it on all fours, advancing slowly, while the bag on his back made him look like an enormous turtle. When near the place where the little animal had stopped, he measured the distance with his eye, stretched out both hands, and fell with his nose in the grass; he got up again with his hands full of earth but no frog. Search as he would, he could not find it again.

As soon as he stood up he noticed, in the distance, two persons coming toward him and making signs. A woman was waving a parasol and a man, in his shirt-sleeves, was carrying his coat over his arm. Then the woman began to run, calling: "Monsieur! Monsieur!" He wiped his forehead and answered: "Madame!"

"Monsieur, we are lost, completely lost," she said.

Shame would not allow him to admit that he was in the same predicament, and he answered gravely: "You are on the road to Versailles."

"What! On the road to Versailles! But we want to go to Rueil," she said.

He was bewildered, but, nevertheless, he answered brazenly: "Madame, I will show you with my government survey map that you are on the road

to Versailles." The husband approached. He looked bewildered, distressed. The woman, young and pretty, a lively brunette, flew into a passion as soon as he got near her: "Come here and see what you have done—we are now in Versailles. Just look at the map which Monsieur will be kind enough to show you. Do you think you will even be able to read? Goodness gracious! What fools some people are! I told you to keep to the right, but you didn't want to; you always think you know everything."

The poor young fellow seemed to despair. He answered: "But, my dear, it's you . . ."

She did not give him time to finish, and she reproached him with everything he had done since they had married up to the present time. He kept casting despairing glances toward the underbrush, which he seemed to pierce with his eyes, and, from time to time, as though seized by insanity, he would let out a shrill cry, something which sounded like "t-i-i-i-t" which did not disturb his wife in the least, but which filled Patissot with astonishment.

The young woman suddenly turned to the clerk and said, with a smile: "If Monsieur will allow us, we will walk along with him so as not to be lost again and run the risk of sleeping in the woods." Being unable to refuse, he bowed, his heart filled with dread, and not knowing where he would lead them.

They walked for a long time; the man kept on crying "t-i-i-i-t"; night fell. The veil which covers the country at dusk was slowly settling down, and a charming and peculiar coolness, which seems to descend over the woods at nightfall, lent to everything a strange sensation of poetry. The little woman had taken Patissot's arm, and with her rosy

mouth she continued to heap reproaches on her husband, who paid no attention to her and kept on calling: "t-i-i-i-t," louder and louder. At last the clerk asked him: "Why do you yell like that?" The other one, with tears in his eyes, answered: "I have lost my poor dog."

"What! You have lost your dog?"

"Yes, we had brought him up in Paris; he had never been to the country, and when he saw the leaves he was so happy that he began to run around as though he were crazy. He ran into the woods, and, no matter how I call, I can't seem to find him. He will starve to death in there—t-i-i-i-t——"

His wife shrugged her shoulders, and said: "When a man is such a fool as you are he doesn't need a dog!"

Suddenly he stopped and felt all his pockets feverishly. She looked at him, and asked: "Well, what's the matter now?"

He answered: "When I threw my coat over my arm I forgot to take my pocketbook out—I have lost it—all my money was in it!"

This time she nearly choked with anger: "Well, go look for it!"

He answered quietly: "Yes, my dear. Where shall I meet you?"

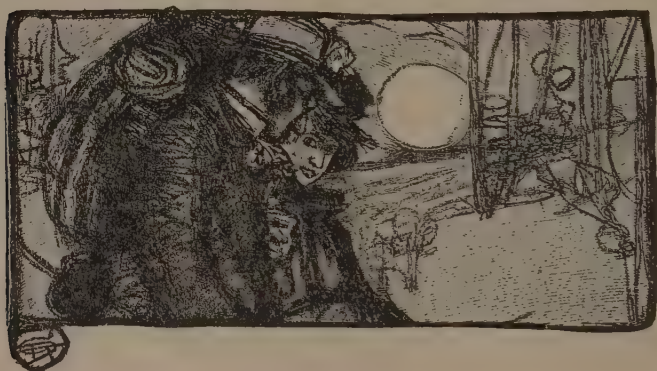
Patissot answered bravely: "Why, at Versailles, of course!"

As he had heard some one speak of the Hôtel des Reservoirs, he mentioned it.

The husband turned around, and, scanning the ground with eager eye, he kept yelling: "t-i-i-i-t." After a while he was swallowed up in the darkness, and his voice could still be heard in the distance uttering his "t-i-i-i-t," the cry growing sharper

and sharper as the night grew darker and his hopes fainter.

Patissot felt delightfully moved when he found himself alone in the thick shadow of the woods at this sentimental hour of dusk, with this pretty little unknown woman leaning on his arm. For the first time in his selfish life he had an inkling of the delight of poetical love, the sweetness of surrender and of the participation of nature in our tenderness.



He searched in vain for some amiable word. Soon a highway appeared and he saw some houses to the right. A man passed by, and Patissot, trembling, asked the name of the place. The man answered: "Bougival!"

"What? Bougival! Are you sure?"

"Of course I am! That's where I live."

The woman burst out laughing. The idea of her lost husband convulsed her with laughter. They dined near the water in a rustic restaurant. She was lively, charming, told any number of funny stories, which upset the mind of her neighbor. At last, when it was time to leave, she exclaimed: "But

I just thought—I haven't got a penny with me, since my husband has lost his pocketbook! ”

Patissot immediately offered her a louis, thinking that he could not lend her less. She said nothing, but held out her hand, took the money with a dignified “ Thank you, Monsieur,” which was soon followed by a smile. Then she put on her hat before the mirror, allowed no one to accompany her now that she knew the way, and at last disappeared like a vanishing bird, while Patissot, very sad, was mentally adding up his expense of the day's outing.

The following day he had a headache and did not go to his office.



CHAPTER III

A VISIT



URING the whole week Patissot told about his adventure, and he depicted poetically the spots which he had crossed, waxing indignant at the lack of enthusiasm which he found about him. Only one person gave him any attention; it was a silent old copying clerk named Boivin, nicknamed Boileau. He himself lived in the country, and had a little garden which he cultivated carefully; his needs were small, and he was perfectly happy, so they said. Patissot was now able to understand his tastes, and the similarity of their ideals made them immediately fast friends. In order to cement this budding friendship, "Old Man" Boivin invited him to luncheon in his little house at Colombes for the following Sunday.

Patissot took the eight-o'clock train, and after a diligent search he discovered, right in the middle of the town, a narrow little street, a kind of filthy passageway between two high walls, at the end of which was a rotten door, closed by a string wound around two nails. He opened it and found himself face to face with an indescribable creature which seemed, however, to be a woman. The upper part of her body was covered with dirty rags, a tattered petticoat hung from her hips, while in her unkempt hair was a mass of pigeon feathers. She looked angrily at the visitor with her little gray eyes, and, after a moment's silence, she asked:

“ Well, what do you want? ”

“ Monsieur Boivin.”

“ Right here! What do you want with Monsieur Boivin? ”

Patissot, embarrassed, hesitated.

“ He is expecting me.”

Then she looked still more fierce and answered:

“ Oh! It's you who is coming to eat, is it? ”

He stammered a trembling “ Yes.” Turning toward the house, she yelled angrily:

“ Boivin, here's your man! ”

Old Man Boivin then appeared in the doorway of a kind of tin-covered, plastered shack, with only one floor, and which looked something like a warming pan. He had on a pair of old cotton trousers, all spotted with coffee, and a dirty panama. After shaking hands with Patissot he led him to what he called his garden; it was a little plot of earth about the size of a pocket-handkerchief and surrounded by houses which were so high that the sun only shone on it for two or three hours a day. A few pansies, carnations, and roses were withering away in this

dark hole, superheated like a furnace by the reflection from the tin roofs.

"I have no trees," said Boivin, "but the walls of the neighboring houses give me as much shade as though I were in a forest."

Then, drawing Patisot to one side, he whispered:

"Do you want to do me a favor? You've seen the old woman, and you can see that she is not an easy proposition. But you're not through with her yet; just wait until luncheon! Just imagine, in order to stop my going out, she doesn't give me my business suit, and she only gives me old rags that are too dirty for city use. To-day I have some clean clothes, because I told her that we were eating together. Good! But I can't water the flowers for fear of spotting my trousers, and if I do that I am lost! I thought, perhaps, I might count on you."

Patisot agreed, took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, and began to work a greasy old pump which wheezed and coughed like a consumptive and gave a stream the size of his little finger. It took ten minutes to fill one watering-can. Patisot was a-drip. Old Man Boivin was guiding him:

"Here, on this plant—a little more. That's enough! That's enough!" The can leaked, and Patisot's feet got more water than the flowers; the bottoms of his trousers were drenched and covered with mud. At least twenty times he soaked his feet and perspired working the pump-handle; and when, tired out, he wished to stop, old Boivin would pull him by the sleeve and beg:

"Just one more, please, that's all."

As remuneration he gave him a rose, but it was so full-blown that, as soon as it came in contact with

Patissot's coat, it lost all its petals, leaving in his buttonhole nothing but a little green bulb, which greatly surprised him. Boivin made believe not to notice it. The voice of Madame Boivin made itself heard: "Well, are you coming? How many times do I have to call you?"

They started for the shack, trembling like two criminals.

If the garden was in the shade the house surely was not; it was full in the sun, and no oven was as hot as those rooms.

Three plates surrounded by dirty knives and forks made of tin stuck to the top of a dirty old pine table, in the middle of which stood an earthen vessel containing some pieces of warmed-over beef in a greasy liquid, in which floated a few dirty-looking potatoes. They sat down and ate. A large decanter full of water slightly tinged with wine caught Patissot's eye. Boivin, a little confused, asked his wife:

"Dearie, don't you think that for the occasion you might give us a little undiluted wine?"

She stared at him furiously:

"So that both of you can get drunk, I suppose, and stay yelling around here all day? No, thank you!"

He was crushed. After the stew came a dish of potatoes, cooked in rancid lard; when this dish had silently been finished, she exclaimed:

"That's all. Now get out!"

Boivin looked at her, surprised.

"But how about the pigeon you were plucking this morning?" he asked.

She placed her hands on her hips and exclaimed:

"Perhaps you haven't had enough! Just be-

cause you bring people here is no reason for eating me out of house and home! What do you expect me to eat to-night? "

The two men arose and went out before the door, and little old Boivin whispered in Patissot's ear:

" Wait for me a minute and we will run away! "

He slipped into the next room to finish dressing, and Patissot overheard the following dialogue:

" Dearie, give me twenty cents. "

" What do you want to do with twenty cents? "

" You never can tell what's liable to happen, and it's always good to have some money about you. "

She screamed; perhaps in order to be heard out-doors:

" No, sir, I'll not give them to you! Since that man has eaten here, the least he can do is to pay your expenses for the rest of the day. "

Old Man Boivin returned to get Patissot; but the latter, wishing to be polite, bowed to the mistress of the house and stammered:

" Madame—many thanks—pleasant time—— "

She answered:

" That's all right—but don't you bring him back drunk, because then, you know, you will have to deal with me! "

They left and went to a spot on the Seine, just opposite a little island covered with poplars. Boivin looked at the river tenderly and squeezed his friend's arm, saying:

" In a week we'll be there, Monsieur Patissot! "

" We'll be where, Monsieur Boivin? "

" Why—fishing. The season opens on the fifteenth. "

Patissot felt a little thrill such as one experi-

ences the first time one sees a woman who touches one's emotions deeply. He answered:

“ So you like fishing, Monsieur Boivin? ”

“ Do I like fishing, Monsieur? Why, it's the delight of my life! ”

Then Patissot questioned him with deep interest. Boivin named all the fish that frolicked under this dirty water—and Patissot thought he could see them. Boivin told about the different hooks, baits, spots, and times suitable for each kind. And Patissot felt himself more like a fisherman than Boivin himself. They decided that the following Sunday they would meet for the opening of the season for the edification of Patissot, who was delighted to have found such an experienced instructor.

For dinner they stopped before a kind of shack frequented by sailors and all the rabble of the neighborhood. Before the door old Boivin took care to say:

“ The appearance isn't very inviting; but it's all right inside.”

They sat down. As soon as Boivin had taken his second glass of wine, Patissot understood why his wife only served him pink water. The little man completely lost his head; he attempted to make speeches, stood up and wished to do tricks, tried to act as pacifier in a quarrel between two fighting drunkards; and he and Patissot would have been killed without the intervention of the owner of the place. Notwithstanding his friend's efforts to stop his drinking, after the coffee had been served he was so intoxicated that he could not stand. When they left Patissot was supporting him.

They struck out across the fields, lost the path, wandered around for a long time, and then suddenly

found themselves in the midst of a forest of high sticks which reached up to their noses. It was a vineyard. They circled around it for a long time, unsteady and dazed, without being able to find their



way out. At last Old Man Boivin fell over a stick which scratched his face, and, without any more ado, he sat down on the ground, and, with a drunkard's obstinacy, he began to yodle at the top of his lungs, while Patissot, bewildered, kept calling for assistance.

A belated farmer rescued them and put them on the right road.

As they approached the house Patissot's courage waned. At last they reached the door, which suddenly opened before them, and, like the furies of the olden times, Madame Boivin appeared with a candle

in her hand. As soon as she saw her husband, she sprang for Patissot, screaming:

"Oh! You rascal! I knew that you would get him drunk!"

The poor man was seized with a wild fright, and, letting go of his friend, who crumpled down in the oily mud of the gutter, he ran toward the station as fast as his legs could carry him.



CHAPTER IV

A FISHING EXCURSION



THE day before the one when he was, for the first time in his life, to throw a hook into a river, Monsieur Patisot bought, for eighty centimes, *How to Become a Perfect Fisherman*. In this work he learned many useful things, but he was especially impressed by the style, and he retained the following passage:

“ In a word, if you wish to fish successfully, to the left or to the right, up or down, without precautions, with that conquering manner which halts at no difficulty, then fish before, during, and after a storm, when the clouds break and the sky is streaked with lightning, when the earth shakes with the grumbling thunder; it is then that, either through hunger or terror, all the fish forget their habits in a turbulent flight.

“ In this confusion follow or neglect all favorable

signs, and just go on fishing; you will march to victory! ”

In order to catch fish of all sizes, he bought three well-perfected poles, made to be used as a cane in the city, and which, on the river, could be transformed into a fishing-rod by a simple jerk. He bought some number fifteen hooks for gudgeon, number twelve for bream, and with his number seven he expected to fill his basket with carp. He bought no earth-worms, because he was sure of finding them everywhere; but he laid in a provision of sand worms. He had a jar full of them; and in the evening he watched them with interest. The hideous creatures swarmed in their bath of bran as they do in putrified meat. Patissot wished to practise baiting his hook. He took one with disgust, but he had hardly placed the curved steel point against it when it burst and emptied out its insides. Twenty times he repeated this without success, and he might have continued all night had he not feared to exhaust his supply of vermin.

He left by the first train. The station was full of people equipped with fishing-lines. Some, like Patissot's, looked like simple bamboo canes; others, in one piece, pointed their slender ends to the skies. They looked like a forest of slender sticks, which mingled and clashed like swords, or swayed like masts over an ocean of broad-brimmed straw hats.

When the train started fishing-rods could be seen sticking out of all the windows and doors, giving to the train the appearance of a huge caterpillar winding through the fields.

Everybody got off at Courbevoie and rushed for the stage for Bezons. A crowd of fishermen jammed themselves on the roof, and, as they were holding

their rods in their hands, the vehicle suddenly took on the appearance of a porcupine.

All along the road men were traveling in the same direction, as though on a pilgrimage to an unknown Jerusalem. They were carrying those long, slender sticks resembling those carried by the faithful returning from Palestine. A tin box on a strap was fastened to their backs. They were in a hurry.

At Bezons the river appeared. People were lined along both banks, men in frock coats, others in duck suits, others in blouses, women, children, and even young girls of marriageable age; all were fishing.

Patissot started for the dam where his friend Boivin was waiting for him. The latter greeted him rather coolly. He had just made the acquaintance of a big, fat man of about fifty, who seemed very strong and whose skin was tanned. All three hired a big boat and lay off almost under the fall of the dam, where the fish are most plentiful.

Boivin was immediately ready. He baited his line and threw it out, and then sat motionless, watching the little bobber with extraordinary concentration. From time to time he would jerk his line out of the water and cast it farther out. The fat gentleman threw out his well-baited hooks, put his line down beside him, filled his pipe, lit it, crossed his arms, and, without another glance at the cork, he watched the water flow by. Patissot once more began trying to stick sand-worms on his hooks. After about five minutes of this occupation he called to Boivin: "Monsieur Boivin, would you be so kind as to help me put these creatures on my hook? Try as I will, I can't seem to succeed." Boivin raised his head: "Please don't disturb me, Monsieur Pa-

tissot; we are not here for pleasure!" However, he baited the line, which Patissot then threw out, carefully imitating all the motions of his friend.

The boat was tossing wildly, shaken by the waves, and spun around like a top by the current, although anchored at both ends. Patissot, absorbed in the sport, felt a vague kind of uneasiness; he was uncomfortably heavy and somewhat dizzy.

They caught nothing; little Boivin, very nervous, was gesticulating and shaking his head in despair; Patissot was as sad as though some disaster had overtaken him; alone, the fat gentleman, always motionless, was quietly smoking without paying any attention to his line. At last Patissot, disgusted, turned toward him and said in a mournful voice:

"They are not biting, are they?"

He quietly replied:

"Of course not!"

Patissot, surprised, looked at him.

"Do you ever catch many?"

"Never!"

"What! Never?"

The fat man, still smoking like a factory chimney, let out the following words, which completely upset his neighbor:

"It would bother me a lot if they *did* bite. I don't come here to fish; I come because I'm very comfortable here; I get shaken up as though I were at sea. If I take a line along, it's only to act like the others."

Monsieur Patissot, on the other hand, did not feel at all well. His discomfort, at first vague, kept increasing, and finally took on a definite form. He felt, indeed, as though he were being shaken by the sea, and he was suffering from seasickness. After

the first attack had calmed down, he proposed leaving; but Boivin grew so furious that they almost came to blows. The fat man, moved by pity, rowed the boat back, and, as soon as Patissot had recovered from his seasickness, they bethought themselves of luncheon.

Two restaurants presented themselves. One of them, very small, looked like a beer-garden, and was patronized by the poorer fishermen. The other one, which bore the imposing name of "Elm Cottage," looked like a middle-class residence, and was frequented by the aristocracy of the sportsmen. The two owners, born enemies, watched each other with hatred across a large field, which separated them, and where the white house of the dam-keeper and the inspector of the life-saving department stood out against the green grass. Moreover, these two officials disagreed, one of them upholding the beer garden, and the other one defending the Elms; and the internal feuds which arose in these three houses reproduced the whole history of mankind.

Boivin, who knew the beer-garden, wished to go there, exclaiming: "The food is very good, and it isn't expensive; you'll see. Anyhow, Monsieur Patissot, you needn't expect to get me tipsy the way you did last Sunday. My wife was furious, you know; and she has sworn never to forgive you!"

The fat gentleman declared that he would only eat at the Elms, because it was an excellent place and the cooking was as good as in the best restaurants of Paris.

"Do as you wish," declared Boivin; "I am going where I am accustomed to go." He left. Patissot, displeased at his friend's actions, followed the fat gentleman.

They ate together, exchanged ideas, discussed opinions, and found that they were made for each other.

After the meal every one started to fish again, but the two new friends left together; following along the bank, they stopped near the railroad bridge and, still talking, they threw their lines in the water. The fish still refused to bite, but Patis-sot was now making the best of it.

A family was approaching. The father, whose whiskers stamped him as a judge, was holding an extraordinarily long rod; three boys of different sizes were carrying poles of different lengths, according to age; and the mother, who was very stout, gracefully manœuvred a charming rod with a ribbon tied to the handle. The father bowed and asked: "Is this spot good, gentlemen?" Patis-sot was going to speak, when his friend answered: "Fine!" The whole family smiled and settled down beside the fishermen. Then Patis-sot was seized with a wild desire to catch a fish, just one, any kind, any size, in order to win the consideration of these people; so he began to handle his rod as he had seen Boivin do in the morning. He would let the cork follow the current to the end of the line, jerk the hooks out of the water, make them describe a large circle in the air, and throw them out again a little higher up. He had even, as he thought, caught the knack of doing this movement gracefully. He had just jerked his line out rapidly when he felt it caught in something behind him. He tugged, and a scream burst from behind him. He perceived, caught on one of his hooks, and describing in the air a curve like a meteor, a magnificent hat which he placed right in the middle of the river.

He turned around, bewildered, dropping his pole, which followed the hat down the stream, while the fat gentleman, his new friend, lay on his back and roared with laughter. The lady, disheveled and astounded, choked with anger; her husband was outraged, and demanded the price of the hat, and Patissot paid about three times its value.

The family departed in a dignified manner.

Patissot took another rod, and, until nightfall, he gave baths to sand-worms. His neighbor was sleeping peacefully on the grass. Toward seven in the evening he awoke.

“Let’s go away from here!” he said.

Then Patissot withdrew his line, gave a cry, and sat down hard from astonishment. At the end of the string was a tiny little fish. When they looked at him more closely they found that he had been hooked through the stomach; the hook had caught him as it was being drawn out of the water.

Patissot was filled with a boundless joy; he wished to have the fish fried for himself alone.

During the dinner the friends grew still more intimate. He learned that the fat gentleman lived at Argenteuil, and had been sailing boats for thirty years without losing interest in the sport. He agreed to take luncheon with him the following Sunday and to take a sail in his friend’s clipper, *Plongéon*. He became so interested in the conversation that he forgot all about his catch. He did not remember it until after the coffee, and he demanded that it be brought him. It was alone in the middle of a platter, and looked like a yellow, twisted match. But he ate it with pride and relish; and, at night, on the omnibus he told his neighbors that he had caught fourteen pounds of fry during the day.



CHAPTER V

TWO CELEBRITIES



ONSIEUR PATISSOT had promised his friend, the boating man, that he would spend the following Sunday with him. An unforeseen occurrence changed his plan. One evening, on the boulevard, he met one of his cousins whom he saw but very seldom. He was a pleasant journalist, well received in all classes of society, who offered to show Patissot many interesting things.

“What are you going to do next Sunday?”

“I’m going boating at Argenteuil.”

“Come on! Boating is an awful bore; there is no variety to it. Listen—I’ll take you along with me. I’ll introduce you to two celebrities. We will visit the homes of two artists.”

“But I have been ordered to go to the country!”

“ That’s just where we’ll go. On the way, we’ll call on Meissonier, at his place in Poissy; then we’ll walk over to Médan, where Zola lives. I have been commissioned to obtain his next novel for our newspaper.”

Patissot, wild with joy, accepted the invitation. He even bought a new frock coat, as his own was too much worn out to make a good appearance. He was terribly afraid of saying something foolish either to the artist or to the man of letters, as do people who speak of arts which they have never practised.

He mentioned his fears to his cousin, who laughed and answered: “ Pshaw! Just pay them compliments, nothing but compliments, always compliments; in that way, if you say anything foolish it will be overlooked. Do you know Meissonier’s paintings? ”

“ I should say I do.”

“ Have you read the Rougon-Macquart series? ”

“ From first to last.”

“ That’s enough. Mention a painting from time to time, speak of a novel here and there, and add: ‘ Superb! Extraordinary! Delightful technique! Wonderfully powerful! ’ In that way you can always get along. I know that those two are very *blasé* about everything, but admiration always pleases an artist.”

Sunday morning they left for Poissy.

Just a few steps from the station, at the end of the church square, they found Meissonier’s property. After passing through a low door, painted red, which led into a beautiful alley of vines, the journalist stopped and, turning toward his companion, asked:

“What is your idea of Meissonnier?”

Patissot hesitated. At last he decided: “A little man, well groomed, clean shaven, a soldierly appearance.” The other smiled: “All right, come along.” A quaint building in the form of a *châlet* appeared to the left; and to the right side, almost opposite, was the main house. It was a strange-looking building, where there was a mixture of everything, a mingling of Gothic fortress, manor, villa, hut, residence, cathedral, mosque, pyramid, a weird combination of Eastern and Western architecture. The style was complicated enough to set a classical architect crazy, and yet there was something whimsical and pretty about it. It had been invented and built under the direction of the artist.

They went in; a collection of trunks encumbered a little parlor. A little man appeared, dressed in a jumper. The striking thing about him was his beard. He bowed to the journalist, and said: “My dear sir, I hope that you will excuse me; I only returned yesterday, and everything is all upset here. Please be seated.” The other refused, excusing himself: “My dear master, I only dropped in to pay my respects while passing by.” Patissot, very much embarrassed, was bowing at every word of his friend’s, as though moving automatically, and he murmured, stammering: “What a su-su-superb property!” The artist, flattered, smiled, and suggested visiting it.

He led them first to a little pavilion of feudal aspect, where his former studio was. Then they crossed a parlor, a dining-room, a vestibule full of beautiful works of art, of beautiful Beauvais, Gobelins and Flanders tapestries. But the strange external luxury of ornamentation became, inside, a

secret stairway in a tower, a servants' stairway in another, stairways everywhere! Patissot, by chance, opened a door, and stepped back astonished. It was a veritable temple, this place of which respectable people only mention the name in English, an original and charming sanctuary in exquisite taste, fitted up like a pagoda, the decoration of which must certainly have caused a great effort.

They next visited the park, which was complex, varied, with winding paths, and full of old trees. But the journalist insisted on leaving; and, with many thanks, he took leave of the master. As they left they met a gardener; Patissot asked him: "Has Monsieur Meissonnier owned this place for a long time?" The man answered: "Oh, Monsieur! that needs explaining. I guess he bought the grounds in 1846. But, as for the house! he has already torn down and rebuilt that five or six times. It must have cost him at least two millions!" As Patissot left he was seized with an immense respect for this man, not on account of his success, glory, or talent, but for putting so much money into a whim, because the *bourgeoisie* deprive themselves of all pleasure in order to hoard money.

After crossing Poissy, they struck out on foot along the road to Médan. The road first followed the Seine, which is dotted with charming islands at this place. Then they went up a hill and crossed the pretty village of Villaines, went down a little, and finally reached the neighborhood inhabited by the author of the Rougon-Macquart series.

A pretty old church with two towers appeared on the left. They walked along a short distance, and a passing farmer directed them to the writer's dwelling.

Before entering they examined the house. A large building, square and new, very high, seemed, like the fable of the mountain and the mouse, to have given birth to a tiny little white house, which nestled near it. This little house was the original dwelling, and had been built by the former owner. The tower had been erected by Zola.

They rang. An enormous dog, a cross between a Saint Bernard and a Newfoundland, began to howl so terribly that Patissot felt a vague desire of retracing his steps. But a servant ran forward, calmed "Bertrand," opened the door, and took the journalist's card in order to carry it to his master.

"I hope that he will receive us!" murmured Patissot. "It would be too bad if we had come all this distance not to see him."

His companion smiled and answered: "Never fear, I have a plan for getting in."

But the servant, who had returned, simply asked them to follow him.

They entered the new building, and Patissot, moved, was panting as he climbed a stairway of ancient style which led to the second story.

At the same time he was trying to picture to himself this man whose glorious name echoes at present in all corners of the earth, amid the exasperated hatred of some, the real or feigned indignation of society, the envious scorn of several of his colleagues, the respect of a mass of readers, and the frenzied admiration of a great number. He expected to see a kind of bearded giant, of awe-inspiring aspect, with a thundering voice and an appearance little prepossessing at first.

The door opened on a room of uncommonly large

dimensions, broad and high, lighted by an enormous window looking out over the valley. Old tapestries covered the walls; on the left, a monumental fireplace, flanked by two stone men, could have burned a century-old oak in one day. An immense table littered with books, papers, and magazines stood in the middle of this apartment so vast and grand that it first engrossed the eye, and the attention was only afterward drawn to the man, stretched out when they entered on an Oriental divan where twenty persons could have slept. He took a few steps toward them, bowed, motioned to two seats, and turned back to his divan, where he sat with one leg drawn under him. A book lay open beside him, and in his right hand he held an ivory paper-cutter, the end of which he observed from time to time with one eye, closing the other with the obstinacy of a near-sighted person.

While the journalist explained the purpose of the visit, and the writer listened to him without yet answering, at times staring at him fixedly, Patissot, more and more embarrassed, was observing this celebrity.

Hardly forty, he was of medium height, fairly stout, and with a good-natured look. His head (very similar to those found in many Italian paintings of the sixteenth century), without being beautiful in the plastic sense of the word, gave an impression of great strength of character, power, and intelligence. Short hair stood up straight on the high, well-developed forehead. A straight nose stopped short, too close to the upper lip, which was covered with a black mustache; over the whole chin was a closely-cropped beard. The dark, often ironical look was piercing; one felt that behind it there was a

mind always actively at work observing people, interpreting words, analyzing gestures, uncovering the heart. This strong, round head was well worthy of its name, quick and short, with the bounding resonance of the two syllables.

When the journalist had fully explained his proposition, the writer answered him that he did not wish to make any definite arrangement, that he would, however, think the matter over, that his plot was not yet sufficiently clear. Then he stopped. It was a dismissal, and the two men, a little confused, arose. A desire seized Patissot; he wished this so well-known person to say something to him, anything, some word which he could repeat to his colleagues; and, growing bold, he stammered: "Oh, Monsieur! If you knew how I appreciate your works!" The other bowed, but answered nothing. Patissot became very bold and continued: "It is a great honor for me to speak to you to-day." The writer once more bowed, but with a stiff and impatient look. Patissot noticed it, and, completely losing his head, he added as he retreated: "What a su-su-superb property!"

Then, in the heart of the man of letters the land owner awoke, and, smiling, he opened the window to show them the immense stretch of view. An endless horizon broadened out on all sides, giving a view of Triel, Pisse-Fontaine, Chanteloup, all the heights of Hautrie, and the Seine as far as the eye could see. The two visitors, delighted, congratulated him, and the house was opened to them. They saw everything, down to the elegant kitchen, whose walls and even ceilings were covered with porcelain tiles ornamented with blue designs, which excited the wonder of the farmers.

“ How did you happen to buy this place? ” asked the journalist.

The novelist explained that, while looking for a cottage to hire for the summer, he had found the little house, which was for sale for several thousand francs, a song, almost nothing. He immediately bought it.

“ But everything that you have added must have cost you a good deal! ”

The writer smiled, and answered: “ Yes, quite a little.”

The two men left. The journalist, taking Patis-sot by the arm, was philosophizing in a slow voice: “ Every general has his Waterloo,” he said; “ every Balzac has his Jardies, and every artist living in the country has a landlord’s heart.”

They took the train at the station of Villaines, and, on the way home, Patissot loudly mentioned the names of the famous painter and of the great novelist as though they were his friends. He even allowed people to think that he had taken luncheon with one and dinner with the other.



CHAPTER VI

BEFORE THE CELEBRATION



THE celebration is approaching and the quivers of it are already running through the streets, just as the ripples disturb the water preparatory to a storm. The shops, draped with flags, display a variety of dyed materials, and the dry-goods people are as deceitful about the three colors as grocers are about the weight of candles. Little by little, hearts warm up to the matter; people speak about it in the street after dinner; ideas are exchanged:

“What a celebration it will be, my friend; what a celebration!”

“Have you heard the news? All the rulers are coming incognito, as *bourgeois*, in order to see it.”

“I hear that the Emperor of Russia has arrived; he expects to go around everywhere with the Prince of Wales.”

“ It certainly will be a fine celebration! ”

It is going to be a celebration; what Monsieur Patissot, Parisian *bourgeois*, calls a celebration; one of these nameless tumults which, for fifteen hours, roll from one end of the city to the other, every ugly specimen toggled out in its finest, a mob of perspiring bodies, where side by side are tossed about the stout gossip bedecked in red, white and blue ribbons, grown fat behind her counter and panting from lack of breath; the rickety clerk with his wife and brat in tow; the laborer carrying his youngster astride his neck; the bewildered provincial with his foolish, dazed expression; the groom, barely shaved and still spreading the perfume of the stable. And the foreigners dressed like monkeys, Englishwomen like giraffes, the clean-looking motor carrier, and the innumerable phalanx of little *bourgeois*, inoffensive little people, amused at everything. All this crowding and pressing, the sweat and dust, and the turmoil, all these eddies of human flesh, trampling of corns under the toes of your neighbors, this city all topsy-turvy, these vile odors, these frantic efforts toward nothing, the breath of millions of people, all redolent of garlic, give to Monsieur Patissot all the joy that it is possible for his heart to hold.

After reading the proclamation of the Mayor on the walls of his district he had made his preparations. This bit of prose said:

“ I wish to call your attention particularly to the part of individuals in this celebration. Decorate your homes, illuminate your windows. Get together, open up a subscription in order to give to your houses and to your street a more brilliant and more artistic appearance than the neighboring houses and streets.”

Then Monsieur Patissot tried to imagine how he could give to his home an artistic appearance.

One serious obstacle stood in the way. His only window looked out on a courtyard, a narrow, dark shaft, where only the rats could have seen his three Japanese lanterns.

He needed a public opening. He found it. On the first floor of his house lived a rich man, a nobleman and a royalist, whose coachman, also a reactionary, occupied a garret room on the sixth floor, facing the street. Monsieur Patissot supposed that by paying (every conscience can be bought) he could obtain the use of the room for the day. He proposed five francs to this citizen of the whip for the use of his room from noon till midnight. The offer was immediately accepted.

Then he began to busy himself with the decorations. Three flags, four lanterns, was that enough to give to this box an artistic appearance—to express all the noble feelings of his soul? No, assuredly not! But, notwithstanding diligent search and nightly meditation, Monsieur Patissot could think of nothing else. He consulted his neighbors, who were surprised at the question; he questioned his colleagues—every one had bought lanterns and flags, some adding, for the occasion, red, white and blue bunting.

Then he began to rack his brains for some original idea. He frequented the cafés, questioning the patrons; they lacked imagination. Then one morning he went up on the top of an omnibus. A respectable-looking gentleman was smoking a cigar beside him, a little farther away a laborer was smoking his pipe upside down, near the driver two toughs

were joking, and clerks of every description were going to business for three cents.

Before the stores stacks of flags were resplendent under the rising sun. Patissot turned to his neighbor.

"It is going to be a fine celebration," he said. The gentleman looked at him sideways and answered in a haughty manner: .

"That makes no difference to me!"

"You are not going to take part in it?" asked the surprised clerk. The other shook his head disdainfully and declared:

"They make me tired with their celebrations! Whose celebration is it? The government's? I do not recognize this government, Monsieur!"

But Patissot, as government employee, took on his superior manner, and answered in a stern voice:

"Monsieur, the Republic is the government."

His neighbor was not in the least disturbed, and, pushing his hands down in his pockets, he exclaimed:

"Well, and what then? It makes no difference to me. Whether it's for the Republic or something else, I don't care! What I want, Monsieur, is to know my government. I saw Charles X and adhered to him, Monsieur; I saw Louis-Philippe and adhered to him, Monsieur; I saw Napoleon and adhered to him; but I have never seen the Republic."

Patissot, still serious, answered:

"The Republic, Monsieur, is represented by its president!"

The other grumbled:

"Well, then, show him to me!"

Patissot shrugged his shoulders.

“ Every one can see him; he’s not shut up in a closet! ”

Suddenly the fat man grew angry.

“ Excuse me, Monsieur, he cannot be seen. I have personally tried more than a hundred times, Monsieur. I have posted myself near the Elysée; he did not come out. A passer-by informed me that he was playing billiards in the café opposite; I went to the café opposite; he was not there. I had been promised that he would go to Melun for the convention; I went to Melun, I did not see him. At last I became weary. I did not even see Monsieur Gambetta, and I do not know a single deputy.”

He was growing excited:

“ A government, Monsieur, is made to be seen; that’s what it’s there for, and for nothing else. One must be able to know that on such and such a day at such an hour the government will pass through such and such a street. Then one goes there and is satisfied.”

Patissot, now calm, was enjoying his arguments.

“ It is true,” he said, “ that it is agreeable to know the people by whom one is governed.”

The gentleman continued more gently:

“ Do you know how I would manage the celebration? Well, Monsieur, I would have a procession of gilded cars, like the chariots used at the crowning of kings; in them I would parade all the members of the government, from the president to the deputies, throughout Paris all day long. In that manner, at least, every one would know by sight the *personnel* of the State.”

But one of the toughs near the coachman turned around, exclaiming:

“ And the fat ox, where would you put him? ”

A laugh ran around the two benches. Patissot understood the objection, and murmured:

“ It might not perhaps be very dignified.”

The gentleman thought the matter over and admitted it.

“ Then,” he said, “ I would place them in view some place, so that every one could see them without going out of his way; on the Triumphal Arch at the Place de l’Etoile, for instance; and I would have the whole population pass before them. That would be very imposing.”

Once more the tough turned around and said:

“ You’d have to take telescopes to see their faces.”

The gentleman did not answer; he continued:

“ It’s just like the presentation of the flags! There ought to be some pretext, a mimic war ought to be organized, and the banners would be awarded to the troops as a reward. I had an idea about which I wrote to the minister; but he has not deigned to answer me. As the taking of the Bastille has been chosen for the date of the national celebration, a reproduction of this event might be made; there would be a pasteboard Bastille, fixed up by a scene-painter and concealing within its walls the whole Column of July. Then, Monsieur, the troop would attack. That would be a magnificent spectacle as well as a lesson, to see the army itself overthrow the ramparts of tyranny. Then this Bastille would be set fire to, and from the midst of the flames would appear the Column with the genius of Liberty, symbol of a new order and the freedom of the people.”

This time every one was listening to him and

finding his idea excellent. An old gentleman exclaimed:

“That is a great idea, Monsieur, which does you honor. It is to be regretted that the government did not adopt it.”

A young man declared that actors ought to recite the *Iambes* of Barbier through the streets in order to teach the people art and liberty simultaneously.

These propositions excited general enthusiasm. Each one wished to have his word; all were wrought up. From a passing hand-organ a few strains of the Marseillaise were heard; the laborer started the song, and everybody joined in, roaring the chorus. The exalted nature of the song and its wild rhythm fired the driver, who lashed his horses to a gallop. Monsieur Patissot was bawling at the top of his lungs, and the passengers inside, frightened, were wondering what hurricane had struck them.

At last they stopped, and Monsieur Patissot, judging his neighbor to be a man of initiative, consulted him about the preparations which he expected to make:

“Lanterns and flags are all right,” said Patissot; “but I prefer something better.”

The other thought for a long time, but found nothing. Then, in despair, the clerk bought three flags and four lanterns.



CHAPTER VII

A SAD STORY



N order to recover from the fatigues due to the celebration, Monsieur Patisot conceived the plan of spending the following Sunday seated in quiet communion with nature.

Wishing to have a broad, expansive outlook, he chose the terrace of Saint-Germain. He did not start out until after luncheon, and after visiting the prehistoric museum to satisfy his conscience, for he understood nothing at all about it, he remained dumb with admiration before this enormous walk, from which can be seen, in the distance, all of Paris and its suburbs, all the plains, villages, woods, ponds, even the cities, and this great, blue, winding serpent, this gentle and beloved stream which passes through the heart of France, the Seine.

In the distance, blue from light mists, incredibly far away, he could descry, on the sides of the hill, little places which looked like white spots. And, seeing over there these little dots, almost invisible, where men like himself were living, suffering, working, he reflected for the first time on the littleness of the world. He said to himself that in space other spots still more imperceptible, universes, larger than ours, however, might perhaps be supporting races still more perfect. He grew dizzy at the immensity of the thought, and he ceased thinking of these things which troubled his brain. Then he slowly followed along the whole length of the terrace, a little weary, as though tired by such deep reflections.

When he had reached the end he sat down on a bench. A gentleman was already there, his chin resting on his hands, which were folded over the top of his cane. He was in an attitude of deep contemplation. But Patissot belonged to that race of people who cannot sit beside their equals for three minutes without talking. He first observed his neighbor, coughed, and then suddenly asked:

“Monsieur, could you tell me the name of the village which I see over there?”

The gentleman raised his head, and answered in a sad voice:

“That is Sartrouville.”

That was all he said. Then Patissot, contemplating the whole expanse of the terrace, shaded by trees a century old, feeling in his lungs the breath of the forest which was rustling behind him, intoxicated by the odors of spring, of the woods, and of the broad country, laughing abruptly, his eyes sparkling, exclaimed:

"This is a beautiful spot for lovers."

His neighbor turned toward him, and exclaimed with a despairing look:

"If I were in love, Monsieur, I would jump in the river."

Patissot did not agree with this point of view, and protested:

"Ho! ho! you speak of that quite freely; and why so?"

"Because it has already cost me too much for me to care to begin over again."

The clerk grinned with joy as he answered:

"Ah! Wild oats are always expensive."

The other sighed unhappily as he answered:

"No, Monsieur, I have sown no wild oats; I have been ill-treated by Fate, that's all."

Patissot, who scented a good story, continued:

"But we cannot all be as abstemious as priests; it is not natural."

Then the man sorrowfully lifted his eyes to heaven, exclaiming:

"That is true, Monsieur; but if priests were like other men my misfortunes would not have arrived. I am an enemy to ecclesiastical celibacy, Monsieur, and I have my reasons for that."

Patissot, greatly interested, insisted:

"Would it be impertinent to ask you . . .?"

"Dear me! No. Here is my story: I come from Normandy, Monsieur. My father was a miller at Darnétal, near Rouen. When he died my brother and I, who were still small children, remained in the care of our uncle, a good, fat *curé* from the neighborhood of Caux. He brought us up, Monsieur, educated us, and then sent the two of us to Paris to look for a suitable position.

“ My brother was twenty-one and I was twenty-two. For the sake of economy, we took a place together, where we were living quietly when the adventure happened which I am about to tell you.

“ One evening, as I was returning home, I saw a young lady in the street who pleased me enormously. She just suited my taste; a little stout and with a good-natured countenance. Naturally I did not dare speak to her, but I gave her a glance full of meaning. The following day I found her at the same place; then, as I was quite shy, I merely bowed; she answered with a little smile, and the following day I addressed her.

“ Her name was Victorine, and she was seamstress in a department store. I knew right away that I was in love with her.

“ I said to her: ‘ Mademoiselle, it seems to me that I can no longer live away from you!’ She lowered her eyes without answering; then I seized her hand and I knew that she would be mine. I was in love, M^{onsieur}; but I did not know how to go about the matter on account of my brother. I had just decided to tell him everything when he spoke first. He, too, was in love. Then it was agreed that we should take separate lodgings, but that not a word of it should be breathed to my good uncle, who would continue to address his letters to my home. The plan was carried out, and a week later Victorine took up her abode with me. We had a little dinner to which my brother brought his friend, and, that evening, when my friend had put everything in order, we definitely took possession of our home.

“ We had just dropped asleep when a violent ringing of the bell awoke me. I looked at the clock; it was three o’clock in the morning. I drew on my

trousers and rushed to the door, saying to myself: 'Some accident must surely have happened . . . ' It was my uncle, Monsieur . . . He had on his traveling coat and was carrying his valise:

" 'Yes, my boy, it is I. I have come to surprise you and spend a few days in Paris. The bishop has granted me a vacation.'

"He kissed me on both cheeks, came in and closed the door. I was more dead than alive, Monsieur. But, as he was going to enter my room, I almost grabbed him by the collar:

" 'No, don't go in there, uncle; come over this way.'

"I pushed him into the dining-room. Can you imagine the position I was in? What could I do? He said to me:

" 'And how about your brother? Is he asleep? Go wake him up.'

"I stammered:

" 'No, uncle; he has been forced to spend the night at the store on account of a pressing order.'

"My uncle rubbed his hands and said:

" 'Then business is going well?'

"An idea struck me, and I exclaimed:

" 'Why, uncle, you must be hungry after your journey!'

" 'By Jove, that's true! I think I could eat something with pleasure.'

"I rushed for the cupboard where I had kept the remains of the dinner. My uncle was a great eater, a true Norman *curé*, capable of eating for twelve hours at a stretch. I brought out some beef, in order to take up time, as I knew he did not like it; after he had eaten enough of that, I brought on the remains of a chicken, almost a whole *pâté*, some

potato salad, three pots of cream and some excellent wine which I had put aside for the following day. At the sight of all this he almost fainted:

“ ‘ Whew! What a larder, my boy! ’ ”

“ How I stuffed him, Monsieur; how I stuffed him! Nor did he resist, (at home it was said that he could eat a herd of cattle). ”

“ By the time he had devoured everything, it was five o'clock in the morning. I was on pins and needles. I lingered on an hour longer with the coffee and dish-washing; but at last he arose, saying:

“ ‘ Well, let's see your home! ’ ”

“ I was lost! I followed him, thinking of jumping out of the window. As I entered the room, ready to faint, hoping for something to occur, a last hope caused my heart to jump. The dear girl had drawn the bed-curtains! If he only would stay away from them! Alas! Monsieur; he immediately walked up to them with his candle in his hand and suddenly raised them. It was warm and we had taken off all the blankets, leaving only the sheet, which she was holding over her head; but one could see the outlines very plainly, Monsieur. I was trembling like a leaf; I seemed to be choking. Then my uncle turned to me, grinning from ear to ear, so that I almost jumped out of my skin from astonishment. ”

“ ‘ Ah! humbug,’ said he. ‘ You didn't want to wake up your brother; well, just watch the way I'll arouse him! ’ I saw his big peasant's hand raised in the air; and, while he was choking with laughter, it dropped like thunder . . . on the contours which could be seen, Monsieur. ”

“ There was a terrific shriek from the bed; and then like a storm under the sheet! At last she appeared almost all at once, with eyes as big as lan-

terns; and she watched my uncle, who was backing away, his mouth gaping and puffing, Monsieur, as though he were about to fall sick.

"Then I completely lost my head, and I ran away . . . I wandered around for six days, Monsieur, not daring to go back home. At last, when I had picked up enough courage to return, there was no one there . . ."

Patisot, shaking with laughter, let go a "I should think not!" which silenced his neighbor.

But after a few seconds the man continued:

"I have never seen my uncle since. He disinherited me, persuaded that I took advantage of my brother's absence to act as I should not.

"Nor have I seen Victorine. My whole family turned their backs on me; and my brother himself, who was made the gainer by the situation, since he inherited a hundred thousand francs at my uncle's death, seems to consider me an old libertine. Yet, Monsieur, I swear that never since that time, and, never . . . never . . . never again! . . . There are times which one never forgets."

"And what are you doing here?" asked Patisot.

The other swept the horizon with a glance, as though fearing to be heard by some unknown ear; then he murmured, with terror in his voice:

"I am keeping away from the women, Monsieur!"



CHAPTER VIII

AN EXPERIMENT IN LOVE



ANY poets think that nature is incomplete without women, and from there, doubtless, come all the flowery comparisons which, in their songs, make our natural companion in turn a rose, a violet, a tulip, or something else of that order. The need of tenderness which seizes us at dusk, when the evening mist begins to roll in from the hills, and when all the perfumes of the earth intoxicate us, is but imperfectly satisfied by lyric invocation. Monsieur Patisot, like all others, was seized with a wild desire for tenderness, for sweet kisses exchanged along a path where sunshine steals in at times, for the pressure of a pair of small hands, for a supple waist bending under his embrace.

He began to look at love as an unbounded pleasure, and, in his hours of reveries, he thanked the Great Unknown for having put so much charm in

the caresses of man. But he needed a companion, and he did not know where to find one. On the advice of a friend, he went to the Folies-Bergère. There he saw a complete assortment. He was greatly perplexed to choose between them, for the desires of his heart were chiefly composed of poetic impulses, and poetry did not seem to be the strong point of these young ladies with penciled eyebrows who smiled at him in such a disturbing manner, showing the enamel of their false teeth. At last his choice fell on a young beginner who seemed poor and timid and whose sad look seemed to announce a nature easily influenced by poetry.

He made an appointment with her for the following day at nine o'clock at the Saint-Lazare station. She did not come, but she was kind enough to send a friend in her stead.

She was a tall, red-haired girl, patriotically dressed in three colors, and covered by an immense tunnel hat, of which her head occupied the center. Monsieur Patissot, a little disappointed, nevertheless accepted this substitute. They left for Maisons-Laffitte, where regattas and a grand Venetian festival had been announced.

As soon as they were in the car, which was already occupied by two gentlemen who wore the red ribbon and three ladies who must at least have been duchesses, they were so dignified, the big red-haired girl, who answered the name of Octavie, announced to Patissot, in a screeching voice, that she was a fine girl fond of a good time and loving the country because there she could pick flowers and eat fried fish. She laughed with a shrillness which almost shattered the windows, familiarly calling her companion: "My big darling."

Shame overwhelmed Patissot, who, as government employee, had to observe a certain amount of decorum. But Octavie stopped talking, glancing at her neighbors, seized with the overpowering desire which haunts all women of a certain class to make the acquaintance of respectable women. After about five minutes she thought she had found an opening, and, drawing from her pocket a *Gil-Blas*, she politely offered it to one of the amazed ladies, who declined, shaking her head. Then the big, red-haired girl began saying things with a double meaning, speaking of women who are *stuck up* without being any better than the others; sometimes she would let out a vulgar word which acted like a bomb exploding amid the icy dignity of the passengers.

At last they arrived. Patissot immediately wished to gain the shady nooks of the park, hoping that the melancholy of the forest would quiet the ruffled temper of his companion. But an entirely different effect resulted. As soon as she was amid the leaves and grass she began to sing at the top of her lungs snatches from operas which had stuck in her frivolous mind, warbling and trilling, passing from *Robert le Diable* to the *Muette*, lingering especially on a sentimental romance, whose last verses she sang in a voice as piercing as a gimlet.

Then suddenly she grew hungry. Patissot, who was still awaiting the hoped-for tenderness, tried in vain to retain her. Then she grew angry, exclaiming:

“ I am not here for a dull time, am I? ”

He had to take her to the Petit-Havre restaurant, which was near the place where the regatta was to be held.

She ordered an endless luncheon, a succession of

dishes substantial enough to feed a regiment. Then, unable to wait, she called for relishes. A box of sardines was brought; she started in on it as though she intended to swallow the box itself. But when she had eaten two or three of the little fishes she

declared that she was no longer hungry and that she wished to see the preparations for the race.

Patissot, in despair, and, in his turn, seized with hunger, absolutely refused to move. She started off alone, promising to return in time for the dessert. He began to eat in lonely silence, not knowing how to lead this rebellious nature to the realization of his dreams.

As she did not return he set out in search of her. She had found some friends, a troop of boatmen, half undressed, sunburned to the tips of their ears, and gesticulating, who were loudly arranging

the details of the contest in front of the house of Fourmaise, the builder.

Two respectable-looking gentlemen, probably the judges, were listening attentively. As soon as she



saw Patisso, Octavie, who was leaning on the tanned arm of a strapping fellow who probably had more muscle than brains, whispered a few words in his ears. He answered:

“Understood!”

She returned to the clerk full of joy, her eyes sparkling, almost caressing.

“Let’s go for a row,” said she.

Pleased to see her so charming, he gave in to this new whim and procured a boat. But she obstinately refused to go to the races, notwithstanding Patisso’s wishes.

“I had rather be alone with you, darling.”

His heart thrilled. At last!

He took off his coat and began to row madly.

A monumental old mill, whose worm-eaten wheels hung over the water, bestrode with its two arches a little arm of the river. Slowly they passed beneath it, and, when they were on the other side, they noticed before them a delightful little stretch of river, shaded by great trees which closed over their heads in a sort of arch. The little stream unwound itself, turned, zigzagged to the right and to the left, continually revealing new horizons, broad fields on one side and on the other side a hill covered with cottages. They passed before a bathing establishment almost entirely hidden by the foliage, a charming country spot where gentlemen in clean gloves and beribboned ladies displayed all the ridiculous awkwardness of elegant people in the country. She cried joyously:

“Later we will take a dip there.”

Farther on, in a kind of bay, she wished to stop, coaxing:

“Come here, honey, close to me.”

She put her arm around his neck and, leaning her head on his shoulder, she murmured:

“How nice it is! How delightful it is on the water!”

Patissot was reveling in happiness. He was thinking of those foolish boatmen who, without ever feeling the penetrating charm of the scenery and the delicate gracefulness of the reeds, row along out of breath, perspiring and tired out, from the tavern where they take luncheon to the tavern where they take dinner.

He was so comfortable that he fell asleep. When he awoke, he was alone. He called, but no one answered. Anxious, he climbed up on the side of the river, fearing that some accident might have happened.

Then, in the distance, coming in his direction, he saw a long, slender gig which four oarsmen as black as negroes were driving through the water like an arrow. It came nearer, skimming over the water; a woman was holding the tiller. Heavens! It looked—it was she! In order to regulate the rhythm of the stroke, she was singing in her shrill voice a boating song, which she interrupted for a minute as she got in front of Patissot. Then, throwing him a kiss, she cried:

“You big goose!”



CHAPTER IX

A DINNER AND SOME OPINIONS



ON the occasion of the national celebration Monsieur Antoine Perdrix, head of Monsieur Patissot's office, was made a knight of the Legion of Honor. He had been in the service for thirty years under preceding governments, and for ten years under the present one. His employees, although grumbling a little at being thus rewarded in the person of their chief, thought it wise, nevertheless, to offer him a cross studded with paste diamonds. The new knight, in turn, not wishing to be outdone, invited them all to dinner for the following Sunday, at his place at Asnières.

The house, decorated with Moorish ornaments, looked like a *café chantant*, but its

location gave it value, as the railroad cut through the whole garden, passing within a hundred and fifty feet of the porch. On the regulation plot of grass stood a basin of Roman cement, containing goldfish and a stream of water the size of that which comes from a syringe, which occasionally made microscopic rainbows at which the guests marveled.

The feeding of this irrigator was the constant preoccupation of Monsieur Perdrix, who would sometimes get up at five o'clock in the morning in order to fill the tank. Then, in his shirt-sleeves, his big stomach almost bursting from his trousers, he would pump wildly, so that on returning from the office he could have the satisfaction of letting the fountain play and of imagining that it was cooling off the garden.

On the night of the official dinner all the guests, one after the other, exclaimed over the situation of the domain, and each time that they heard a train in the distance, Monsieur Perdrix would announce to them its destination: Saint-Germain, Le Havre, Cherbourg, or Dieppe, and they would playfully wave to the passengers leaning from the windows.

The whole office force was there. First came Monsieur Capitaine, the assistant chief; Monsieur Patisot, chief clerk; then Messieurs de Sombreterre and Vallin, elegant young employees who only came to the office when they had to; lastly Monsieur Rade, known throughout the ministry for the absurd doctrines which he upheld, and the copying clerk, Monsieur Boivin.

Monsieur Rade passed for a character. Some called him a dreamer or an idealist, others a revolutionary; every one agreed that he was very clumsy. Old, thin, and small, with bright eyes and long, white

hair, he had all his life professed a profound contempt for administrative work. A book rummager and a great reader, with a nature continually in revolt against everything, a seeker of truth and a despiser of popular prejudices, he had a clear and paradoxical manner of expressing his opinions which closed the mouths of self-satisfied fools and of those that were discontented without knowing why. People said: "That old fool of a Rade," or else: "That hare-brained Rade;" and the slowness of his promotion seemed to show up to his disadvantage. His freedom of speech often made his colleagues tremble; they asked themselves with terror how he had been able to keep his place as long as he had. As soon as they had seated themselves, Monsieur Perdrix thanked his "collaborators" in a well-termed little speech, promising them his protection, the more efficacious as his power grew, and he ended with a stirring peroration where he thanked and glorified a government so liberal and just that it knows how to seek out the worthy from among the humble.

Monsieur Capitaine, the assistant chief, answered in the name of the office, congratulated, greeted, exalted, sang the praises of all; frantic applause greeted these two bits of eloquence. After that they settled down seriously to the business of eating.

Everything went well up to the dessert; lack of conversation bothered no one. But after the coffee a discussion arose, and Monsieur Rade let himself loose, and soon began to overstep the bounds of discretion.

They were naturally discussing love, and a breath of chivalry intoxicated this room full of bureaucrats; they were praising and exalting the su-

perior beauty of woman, the delicacy of her soul, her aptitude for exquisite things, the correctness of her judgment, and the refinement of her sentiments. Monsieur Rade began to protest, energetically refusing to credit the so-called "fair" sex with any of the qualities which are ascribed to it; then, before the general indignation, he quoted some authors:

"Schopenhauer, gentlemen, Schopenhauer, the great philosopher, revered by all Germany, says: 'Man's intelligence must have been terribly deadened by love in order to call this sex with the small, waist, narrow shoulders, large hips, and crooked legs, the fair sex. All its beauty lies in the instinct of love. Instead of calling it the fair, it would have been better to call it the unæsthetic sex. Women have neither the appreciation nor the knowledge of music, any more than they have of poetry or of the plastic arts; with them it is merely an apelike quality, a pure pretext, affectation cultivated from their desire to please.' "

"The man who said that is an idiot," exclaimed Monsieur de Sombreterre.

Monsieur Rade smilingly continued:

"And how about Rousseau, gentlemen? Here is his opinion: 'Women, as a rule, love no art, are skilled in none, and have no talent.' "

Monsieur de Sombreterre disdainfully shrugged his shoulders:

"Then Rousseau is as much of a fool as the other, that's all."

Monsieur Rade, still smiling, went on:

"And this is what Lord Byron said, who nevertheless loved women: 'They should be well fed and well dressed, but not allowed to mingle with society.

They should also be taught religion, but they should ignore poetry and politics, only being allowed to read pious or cooking books.' "

Monsieur Rade continued:

" You see, gentlemen, all of them study painting and music. But not a single one of them has ever painted a remarkable picture or composed a great opera! Why, gentlemen? Because they are the *sexus sequior*, the second sex in every sense of the word, made to be kept apart in the background."

Monsieur Patisot was growing angry, and exclaimed:

" And how about Madame Sand, Monsieur? "

" She is the one exception, Monsieur, the one exception. I will quote to you another passage from another great philosopher, this one an Englishman: Herbert Spencer. Here is what he says: ' Each sex is capable, under the influence of abnormal stimulation, of manifesting faculties ordinarily reserved for the other one. Thus, for instance, in extreme cases a special excitement may cause the breasts of men to give milk; children deprived of their mothers have often thus been saved in time of famine. Nevertheless, we do not place this faculty of giving milk among the male attributes. It is the same with female intelligence, which, in certain cases, will give superior products, but which is not to be considered in an estimate of the feminine nature as a social factor . . . ' "

All Monsieur Patisot's chivalric instincts were wounded, and he declared:

" You are not a Frenchman, Monsieur. French gallantry is a form of patriotism."

Monsieur Rade retorted:

“ I have very little patriotism, Monsieur, as little as I can.”

A coolness settled over the company, but he continued quietly:

“ Do you admit with me that war is a monstrosity; that this custom of killing off people constitutes a condition of savagery; that it is odious, when the only real good is Life, to see governments, whose duty it is to protect the lives of their subjects, obstinately looking for means of destruction? Am I not right? Well, if war is a terrible thing, what about patriotism, which is the idea at the base of it? When a murderer kills he has a fixed idea; it is to steal. When a good man sticks his bayonet through another good man, father of a family, or, perhaps, a great artist, what idea is he following out? ”

Everybody was shocked.

“ When one has such thoughts, one should not express them aloud.”

M. Patissot continued:

“ There are, however, Monsieur, principles which all good people recognize.”

M. Rade asked: “ Which ones? ”

Then, very solemnly, M. Patissot pronounced: “ Morality, Monsieur.”

M. Rade was beaming; he exclaimed:

“ Just let me give you one example, gentlemen, one little example. What is your opinion of the gentlemen with the silk hats who thrive along the boulevards on the delightful traffic which you know, and who make a living out of it? ”

A look of disgust ran around the table:

“ Well? Gentlemen, only a century ago, when an elegant gentleman, very ticklish about his honor,

had for . . . friend . . . a beautiful and rich lady, it was considered perfectly proper to live at her expense and even to squander her whole fortune. This game was considered delightful. This only goes to show that the principles of morality are by no means settled . . . and that . . .”

M. Perdrix, visibly embarrassed, stopped him:

“Monsieur Rade, you are sapping the foundations of society. One must always have principles. Thus, in politics, here is Monsieur le Sombreterre, who is a Legitimist; Monsieur Vallin, an Orleanist; Monsieur Patissot and myself, Republicans; we all have very different principles, and yet we agree very well because we have them.”

But M. Rade exclaimed:

“I also have principles, gentlemen, very distinct ones.”

Monsieur Patissot raised his head and coldly asked:

“It would please me greatly to know them, Monsieur.”

M. Rade did not need to be coaxed.

“Here they are, Monsieur:

“*First principle*—Government by one person is a monstrosity.

“*Second principle*—Restricted suffrage is an injustice.

“*Third principle*—Universal suffrage is idiotic.

“To deliver up millions of men, superior minds, scientists, even geniuses, to the caprice and will of a being who, in an instant of gaiety, madness, intoxication or love, would not hesitate to sacrifice everything for his exalted fancy, will spend the wealth of the country amassed by others with difficulty, will have thousands of men slaughtered on

the battle-fields, all this appears to me, a simple logician, a monstrous aberration.

“ But, admitting that a country must govern itself, to exclude, on some always debatable pretext, a part of the citizens from the administration of affairs is such an injustice that it seems to me unworthy of a further discussion.

“ There remains universal suffrage. I suppose that you will agree with me that geniuses are a rarity. Let us be liberal and say that there are at present five in France. Now, let us add, perhaps, two hundred men with a decided talent, one thousand others possessing various talents, and ten thousand superior intellects. This is a staff of eleven thousand two hundred and five minds. After that you have the army of mediocrities followed by the multitude of fools. As the mediocrities and the fools always form the immense majority, it is impossible for them to elect an intelligent government.

“ In order to be fair I admit that logically universal suffrage seems to me the only admissible principle, but it is impracticable. Here are the reasons why:

“ To make all the living forces of the country coöperate in the government, to represent all the interests, to take into account all the rights, is an ideal dream, but hardly practicable, because the only force which can be measured is that very one which should be neglected, the stupid strength of numbers. According to your method, unintelligent numbers equal genius, knowledge, learning, wealth, and industry. When you are able to give to a member of the Institute ten thousand votes to a ragman's one, one hundred votes for a great land owner as against his farmer's ten, then you will have approached an

equilibrium of forces and obtained a national representation which will really represent the strength of the nation. But I challenge you to do it.

“ Here are my conclusions :

“ Formerly, when a man was a failure at every other profession he turned photographer ; now he has himself elected a deputy. A government thus composed will always be sadly lacking, incapable of evil as well as of good. On the other hand, a despot, if he be stupid, can do a lot of harm, and, if he be intelligent (a thing which is very scarce), he may do good.

“ I cannot decide between these two forms of government ; I declare myself to be an anarchist, that is to say, a partisan of that power which is the most unassuming, the least felt, the most liberal, in the broadest sense of the word, and revolutionary at the same time ; by that I mean the everlasting enemy of this same power, which can in no way be anything but defective. That’s all ! ”

Cries of indignation rose about the table, and all, whether Legitimist, Orleanist, or Republican through force of circumstances, grew red with anger. M. Patissot especially was choking with rage, and, turning toward M. Rade, he cried :

“ Then, Monsieur, you believe in nothing ? ”

The other answered quietly :

“ You’re absolutely correct, Monsieur.”

The anger stirred in all the guests prevented M. Rade from continuing, and M. Perdrix, as chief, closed the discussion.

“ Enough, gentlemen ! We each have our opinion, and we have no intention of changing it.”

All agreed with these wise words. But M. Rade, never satisfied, wished to have the last word.

“ I have, however, one moral,” said he. “ It is simple and always applicable. One sentence embraces the whole thought; here it is: ‘ *Never do unto another that which you would not have him do unto you.*’ I defy you to pick any flaw in it, while I will undertake to demolish your most sacred principles with three arguments.”

This time there was no answer. But as they were going home at night, by couples, each one was saying to his companion: “ Really, Monsieur Rade goes much too far. His mind must surely be unbalanced. He ought to be appointed assistant chief at the Charenton Asylum.”



CHAPTER X

A PUBLIC MEETING



ON both sides of the door, over which the word " Ball " appeared in large letters, great, flaring red posters announced that this Sunday would be devoted to another purpose than popular amusement.

M. Patissoot, wandering along like a good *bourgeois* while digesting his luncheon and sauntering slowly toward the station, stopped, his attention attracted by this brilliant color, and he read:

" GENERAL INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION
FOR THE VINDICATION OF WOMEN'S
RIGHTS.

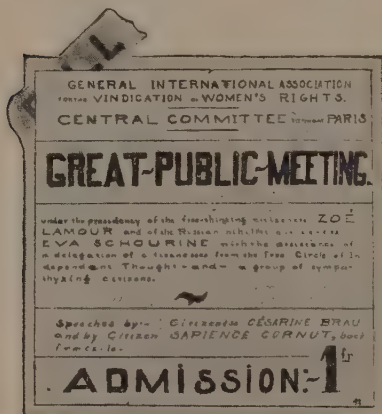
" CENTRAL COMMITTEE SITTING AT PARIS.

“ *GREAT PUBLIC MEETING.* ”

“ Under the chairmanship of the free-thinking citizeness Zoé Lamour and of the Russian nihilist citizeness Eva Schourine, with the assistance of a delegation of citizenesses from the Free Circle of Independent Thought, and a group of sympathizing citizens.

“ *Speeches by the citizeness Césarine Brau and citizen Sapience Cornut, back from exile.* ”

“ **ADMISSION: 1 franc.** ”



An old lady with spectacles, seated before a table covered with a cloth, was taking in the money. M. Patisot entered.

In this hall, already half full, floated an odor like that of a wet dog, which is always to be noticed near old maids, with the remains of the suspicious perfumes of public balls.

M. Patisot searched diligently and at last discovered a seat in the second row, beside an old gen-

tleman wearing the emblem of the Legion of Honor and a young woman dressed as a working-girl, with an exalted expression and with swollen black and blue marks all over her cheeks.

The staff was complete. The citizeness Zoé Lamour, a pretty little brunette with pink flowers stuck in her dark hair, divided the chair with a thin little blonde, the Russian nihilist citizeness, Eva Schourine.

Just below them the illustrious citizeness Cézarine Brau, known as the "Annihilator of Men," also a handsome woman, sat beside the citizen Sapience Cornut, back from exile. The latter, a solid-looking old man with a ferocious expression, was looking around the hall just as a cat watches a flock of birds; his fists were resting on his knees.

To the right a delegation of ancient citizenesses minus husbands, dried up in single blessedness and exasperated at the delay, were facing a group of citizens ready to reform the world, who had never trimmed either their beards or their hair, probably in order to show the infinite extent of their aspirations.

It was a mixed gathering. The majority of women belonged to the class of janitresses and shopkeepers who close up on Sundays. Everywhere the inconsolable faces of old maids appeared between the red countenances of the housewives. Three schoolboys, who had come in order to be among women, were whispering in the corner. A few families came through curiosity. In the first row sat a negro, clad in yellow, a magnificent, curly-headed negro, who was obstinately watching the staff and grinning from ear to ear, shaken by a silent laugh which showed the gleaming white of his teeth. He

was laughing like a man who is delighted, overcome with joy. Why was he there? That was a mystery. Had he expected to see a show? Or else did he say to himself, in his woolly African head: "Well! well! these people certainly are funny; we couldn't see anything like that near the equator."

Citizeness Zoé Lamour opened the meeting with a little speech.

She recalled the servitude of women since the origin of the world, her humble yet heroic rôle, her constant devotion to all great ideas. She compared her to the people of olden times, to the people of the kings and aristocracy, calling her "the eternal martyr" for whom every man is a *master*; and in a great burst of lyric eloquence, she exclaimed: "The people had their '89—let us have ours! Man, oppressed, had his *Revolution*; the captive broke his chain; the outraged slave revolted. Women, let us imitate our tyrants! Let us revolt! Let us sever the ancient bond of marriage and of servitude! Let us march to the conquest of our rights; let us also have our revolution!"

She sat down again amid thunderous applause; and the negro, wild with joy, was striking his head against his knees and shrieking with laughter.

The Russian nihilist citizeness, Eva Schourine, arose, and, in a shrill and ferocious voice, she exclaimed:

"I am a Russian. I have raised the banner of revolt; this hand has struck down the oppressors of my fatherland; and I declare to you Frenchwomen who are listening to me that I am ready under any skies, in any country of the universe, to attack the tyranny of man, everywhere to avenge women, so disgracefully oppressed!"

A great buzz of approbation arose, and citizen Sapience Cornut gallantly stood up and scraped his yellow beard against this avenging hand.

At this point the ceremony took on a truly international character. The citizenesses delegated by the foreign powers arose one after the other, bringing the adhesion of their respective fatherlands. First a German woman spoke. She was fat, with a growth of stringlike hair on her scalp, and she sputtered in a thick voice:

“ I wish to tell de choy vot dey felt in old Chermany ven dey of de great moufement of Barisian vimin heard. Our breasts (she struck hers, which did not resist the shock), our breasts thrilled mit . . . mit . . . I don’t talk vell, but ve are olretty mit you! ”

An Italian, a Spaniard, and a Swede said about the same things in the most marvelous dialects; to conclude, an Englishwoman, built on the plan of a bean-pole, whose inordinately long teeth resembled gardening implements, exclaimed:

“ I also wish to bring to you the assurance of the support of Free England to the picturesque manifestation of the feminine population of France for the emancipation of the female sex. Hip! hip! hurrah! ”

This time the negro began to utter such shrieks of delight, with such immoderate gestures of satisfaction (throwing his legs over the backs of the seats and furiously slapping his thighs), that the two ushers were forced to calm him down.

Patissot’s neighbor murmured:

“ Hysterical! All hysterical. ”

Patissot, believing that he was being spoken to, turned around, asking:

“What was that, please?”

The gentleman excused himself:

“Pardon me, I was not speaking to you. I was merely saying that all these crazy women are hysterical!”

M. Patissot, greatly surprised, asked:

“Then you know them?”

“I should say so, Monsieur! Zoé Lamour took her novitiate to be a nun. That’s one. Eva Schourine has been accused of arson and declared insane. That’s two. Césarine Brau is simply an adventuress trying to gain notoriety. I see three others over there who have passed through my hands in the hospital of X——. As for all the other old shrews who surround us, nothing more need be said about them.”

People were crying “Hush”! on all sides. Citizen Sapience Cornut, back from exile, was standing up. First he rolled his eyes in a terrible manner; then, in a hollow voice, which sounded like wind whistling in a cave, he began:

“There are words as great as principles, as luminous as suns, as resounding as thunder: Liberty! Equality! Fraternity! These are the banners of the people. Under their folds did we overthrow tyranny. It is your turn now, O women, to brandish them as weapons for the conquest of independence. Be free, free in love, at home, in the fatherland. Become our equals on the earth, in the street, and especially in politics and before the law! Fraternity! Be our sisters, the confidantes of our great projects, our courageous companions! Become truly a half of humanity instead of being only a small part of it!”

Then he plunged into transcendental politics, de-

veloping plans as great as the world, speaking of the soul of society, predicting the Universal Republic built on these three indestructible bases: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.

When he stopped a perfect uproar of bravos arose. M. Patissot, bewildered, turned to his neighbor, asking:

“Is he not a little bit insane?”

The old gentleman answered:

“No, Monsieur; there are millions just like him. It is a result of education.”

M. Patissot did not understand.

“Of education?”

“Yes; now that they know how to read and write the latent foolishness awakes.”

“Then, Monsieur, you believe that education”

“Excuse me, Monsieur, I am very broad-minded, but this is what I mean to say: you have a watch, haven't you? Well, break one of its springs and then carry it to this citizen Cornut and ask him to fix it. He will swear at you and answer that he is not a watchmaker. But if something happens to be out of order in this infinitely complicated piece of machinery called France, he thinks himself entirely fitted to repair it instantly. Forty thousand brawlers like him think the same thing and are continually proclaiming it. I say, Monsieur, that up to now we lack new governing classes of leaders; by that I mean, men born of fathers accustomed to power, brought up with that idea, educated especially for that just as young men are educated who intend to go to the Polytechnic”

Numerous cries of “Hush!” once more inter-

rupted them. A mournful-looking young man occupied the platform. He began:

“Ladies, I have asked for a word in order to attack your theories. To demand for woman civil rights equal to those of man is equivalent to demanding the end of your power. The mere external appearance of woman shows that she is destined neither to hard physical work nor to long intellectual efforts. Her rôle, though different, is nevertheless beautiful. She infuses poetry into life. By the power of her gracefulness, the glance of her eye, the charm of her smile, she rules man, who rules the world. Man has the faults which you cannot take from him; but you have the seductiveness which captivates force. Of what do you complain? Since the beginning of the world you have been the sovereigns and rulers. Nothing is done without you. All beautiful actions are done for you.

“As soon as you become our equals civilly and politically, you become our rivals. Take care then that the charm which constitutes your force is not broken. Then, as we are unquestionably the more vigorous and the better gifted for sciences and arts, your inferiority will appear and you will truly become the oppressed.

“At present, ladies, you have a beautiful rôle, since you are for us the whole charm of life, the endless illusion, the eternal reward of our efforts. Do not try to alter this state of affairs. You will not succeed, anyhow.”

Hisses interrupted him. He left the platform.

Patissot's neighbor then got up, saying:

“That young man is a little romantic, but he

has good common sense just the same. Will you come and have a glass of beer, Monsieur? ”

“ With pleasure! ”

They left while citizeness Césarine Brau was preparing to reply.



MADAME HUSSON'S ROSIER



E had just left Gisors, where I was awakened by hearing the name of the town called out by the guards, and I was dozing off again when a terrific shock threw me forward on top of a large lady who sat opposite me.

One of the wheels of the engine had broken, and the engine itself lay across the track. The tender and the baggage-car were also derailed, and lay beside this mutilated engine, which rattled, groaned, hissed, puffed, sputtered, and resembled those horses that fall in the street with their flanks heaving, breasts palpitating, nostrils steaming, and the whole body trembling, but incapable of the slightest effort to rise and go on again.

There were no dead, or wounded; only a few

with bruises, for the train was not going at full speed. And we looked with sorrow at the great crippled iron creature, which could not draw us along any more, and which perhaps would block the track for some time, for no doubt they would have to send to Paris for a special train to come to our aid.

It was then ten o'clock in the morning, and I at once decided to go back to Gisors for breakfast.

As I was walking along I said to myself:

“Gisors—Gisors—why, I know some one there! Who is it? Gisors? Let me see, I have a friend in this town.” A name suddenly came to my mind, “Albert Marambot.” He was an old school friend whom I had not seen for at least twelve years, and who was practising medicine in Gisors. He had often written inviting me to come to see him, and I had always promised to do so, without keeping my word. But at last I would take advantage of this opportunity.

I asked the first passer-by:

“Do you know where Doctor Marambot lives?”

He replied without hesitation, and with the drawling accent of the Normans:

“Rue Dauphine.”

I presently saw, on the door of the house he pointed out, a large brass plate on which was engraved the name of my old chum. I rang the bell, but the servant, a yellow-haired girl who moved slowly, said with a stupid air:

“He isn't here, he isn't here.”

I heard a sound of forks and of glasses, and I cried:

“Hallo, Marambot!”

A door opened, and a large man, with a beard

and a cross look on his face, appeared, carrying a dinner napkin in his hand.

I certainly should not have recognized him. One would have said he was forty-five at least, and in a second all the provincial life which makes one grow heavy, dull, and old came before me. In a single flash of thought, quicker than the act of extending my hand to him, I could see his life, his manner of existence, his line of thought, and his theories on things in general. I guessed at the prolonged meals that had rounded out his stomach, his after-dinner naps from the torpor of a slow digestion aided by cognac, and his vague glances cast on the patient while he thought of the chicken that was roasting before the fire. His conversations about cooking, about cider, brandy, and wine, the way of preparing certain dishes and of blending certain sauces were revealed to me at sight of his puffy red cheeks, his heavy lips, and his lusterless eyes.

"You do not recognize me. I am Raoul Aubertin," I said.

He opened his arms and gave me such a hug that I thought he would choke me.

"You have not breakfasted, have you?"

"No."

"How fortunate! I was just sitting down to table, and I have an excellent trout."

Five minutes later I was sitting opposite him at breakfast. I said:

"Are you a bachelor?"

"Yes, indeed."

"And do you like it here?"

"Time does not hang heavy; I am busy. I have patients and friends. I eat well, have good health, enjoy laughing and shooting. I get along."

“Is not life very monotonous in this little town?”

“No, my dear boy, not when one knows how to fill in the time. A little town, in fact, is like a large one. The incidents and amusements are less varied, but one makes more of them; one has fewer acquaintances, but one meets them more frequently. When you know all the windows in a street, each one of them interests you and puzzles you more than a whole street in Paris.

“A little town is very amusing, you know—very amusing, very amusing. Why, take Gisors; I know it at the tips of my fingers, from its beginning up to the present time. You have no idea what a queer history it has.”

“Do you belong to Gisors?”

“I? No. I come from Gournay, its neighbor and rival. Gournay is to Gisors what Lucullus was to Cicero. Here, everything is for glory; they say ‘the proud people of Gisors.’ At Gournay, everything is for the stomach; they say ‘the gormandizers of Gournay.’ Gisors despises Gournay, but Gournay laughs at Gisors. It is a very comical country, this.”

I perceived that I was eating something very delicious, hard-boiled eggs wrapped in a covering of meat jelly, flavored with herbs and put on ice for a few moments. I said, as I smacked my lips to compliment Marambot:

“That is good.”

He smiled:

“Two things are necessary, good jelly, which is hard to get, and good eggs. Oh, how rare good eggs are, with the yolks slightly reddish and with a good flavor! I have two poultry yards, one for

eggs and the other for chickens. I feed my laying hens in a special manner. I have my own ideas on the subject. In an egg, as in the meat of a chicken, in beef, or in mutton, in milk, in everything, one notices, and ought to taste, the juice, the quintessence of all the good on which the animal has been fed. How much better food we could have if more attention were paid to this! ”

I laughed as I said:

“ You are a gourmand? ”

“ *Parbleu!* It is only imbeciles who are not. One is a gourmand as one is an artist, as one is learned, as one is a poet. The sense of taste, my friend, is very delicate, capable of perfection, and quite as worthy of respect as the eye and the ear. A person who lacks this sense is deprived of an exquisite faculty, the faculty of discerning the quality of food, just as one may lack the faculty of discerning the beauties of a book or of a work of art; it means to be deprived of an essential organ, of something that belongs to higher humanity; it means to belong to one of those innumerable classes of the infirm, the unfortunate, and the fools of which our race is composed; it means to have the mouth of an animal, in a word, just like the mind of an animal. A man who cannot distinguish one kind of lobster from another; a herring—that admirable fish that has all the flavors, all the odors of the sea—from a mackerel or a whiting, and a Cresane from a Duchess pear, may be compared to a man who should mistake Balzac for Eugène Sue, a symphony of Beethoven for a military march composed by the bandmaster of a regiment, and the Apollo Belvedere for the statue of General de Blamont.”

“ Who is General de Blanmont? ”

“ Oh, that's true, you do not know. It is easy to tell that you do not belong to Gisors. I told you just now, my dear boy, that they called the inhabitants of this town ‘ the proud people of Gisors,’ and never was an epithet better deserved. But let us finish breakfast first, and then I will tell you about our town and take you to see it.”

He stopped talking every now and then while he slowly drank a glass of wine which he gazed at affectionately as he replaced the glass on the table.

It was amusing to see him, with a napkin tied round his neck, his cheeks flushed, his eyes eager, and his beard spreading round his mouth as it kept working.

He made me eat until I was almost choking. Then, as I was about to return to the railway station, he seized me by the arm and took me through the streets. The town, of a pretty, provincial type, commanded by its citadel, the most curious monument of military architecture of the seventh century to be found in France, overlooks, in its turn, a long, green valley, where the large Norman cows graze and ruminate in the pastures.

The doctor quoted:

“ ‘ Gisors, a town of four thousand inhabitants, in the department of Eure, mentioned in Cæsar's Commentaries: *Cæsaris ostium*, then *Cæsartium*, *Cæsortium*, *Gisortium*, Gisors.’ I shall not take you to visit the old Roman encampment, the remains of which are still in existence.”

I laughed and replied:

“ My dear friend, it seems to me that you are affected with a special malady that, as a doctor,

you ought to study; it is called the spirit of provincialism."

He stopped abruptly.

"The spirit of provincialism, my friend, is nothing but natural patriotism," he said. "I love my house, my town, and my province because I discover in them the customs of my own village; but if I love my country, if I become angry when a neighbor sets foot in it, it is because I feel that my home is in danger, because the frontier that I do not know is the highroad to my province. For instance, I am a Norman, true Norman; well, in spite of my hatred of the German and my desire for revenge, I do not detest them, I do not hate them by instinct as I hate the English, the real, hereditary natural enemy of the Normans; for the English traversed this soil inhabited by my ancestors, plundered and ravaged it twenty times, and my aversion to this perfidious people was transmitted to me at birth by my father. See, here is the statue of the General."

"What general?"

"General Blanmont! We had to have a statue. We are not the proud people of Gisors for nothing! So we discovered General de Blanmont. Look in this bookseller's window."

He drew me toward the bookstore, where about fifteen red, yellow, and blue volumes attracted the eye. As I read the titles I began to laugh idiotically. They read: *Gisors, Its Origin, Its Future*, by M. X. . . ., member of several learned societies; *History of Gisors*, by the Abbé A . . .; *Gisors, from the Time of Cæsar to the Present Day*, by M. B. . . ., landowner; *Gisors and Its Environs*, by Doctor C. D. . . .; *The Glories of Gisors*, by A Discoverer.

“ My friend,” resumed Marambot, “ not a year, not a single year, you understand, passes without a fresh history of Gisors being published here; we now have twenty-three.”

“ And the glories of Gisors? ” I asked.

“ Oh, I will not mention them all, only the principal ones. We had first General de Blanmont, then Baron Davillier, the celebrated ceramist who explored Spain and the Balearic Isles and brought to the notice of collectors the wonderful Hispano-Arabic china. In literature we have a very clever journalist, now dead, Charles Brainne, and among those who are living, the very eminent editor of the *Nouvelliste de Rouen*, Charles Lapierre . . . and many others, many others.”

We were traversing a long street with a gentle incline, with a June sun beating down on it and driving the residents into their houses.

Suddenly, at the farther end of the street, appeared a drunken man who was staggering along, with his head forward, his arms and legs limp. He would walk forward rapidly three, six, or ten steps and then stop. When these energetic movements landed him in the middle of the road he stopped short and swayed on his feet, hesitating between falling and a fresh start. Then he would dart off in any direction, sometimes falling against the wall of a house, against which he seemed to be fastened, as if he were trying to get in through the wall. Then he would suddenly turn round and look ahead of him, his mouth open and his eyes blinking in the sunlight, and getting away from the wall by a movement of the hips, he staggered off once more.

A little yellow dog, a half-starved cur, followed

him, barking; stopping when he stopped, and starting when he started.

"Hallo," said Marambot, "there is Madame Husson's 'Rosier.'"

"Madame Husson's 'Rosier'!" I exclaimed in astonishment. "What do you mean?"

The doctor began to laugh:

"Oh, that is what we call drunkards round here. The name comes from an old story which has now become a legend, although it is true in all respects."

"Is it an amusing story?"

"Very amusing."

"Well, then, tell it to me."

"I will.

"There lived formerly in this town a very upright old lady, who was a great guardian of morals, and was called Madame Husson. You know, I am telling you the real names and not imaginary ones. Madame Husson took a special interest in good works, in helping the poor and encouraging the deserving. She was a little woman with a quick walk and wore a black wig. She was ceremonious, polite, on very good terms with the Almighty in the person of Abbé Malou, and had a profound horror, an inborn horror, of vice, and, in particular, of the vice the Church calls lasciviousness. Any irregularity before marriage made her furious, exasperated her till she was beside herself.

"Now, this was the period when they presented a prize as a reward of virtue to any girl in the environs of Paris who was found to be chaste. She was called a Rosière; and Madame Husson conceived the idea that she would institute a similar ceremony at Gisors. She spoke about it to the Abbé

Malou, who at once made out a list of candidates.

“ However, Madame Husson had a servant, an old woman called Françoise, as upright as her mistress. As soon as the priest had left, Madame called the servant and said:

“ ‘ Here, Françoise, here are the names of the girls that Monsieur le Curé has submitted to me for the prize of virtue; try to find out what reputation they bear in the district.’

“ And Françoise set out. She collected all the scandal, all the stories, all the tattle, all the suspicions. That she might omit nothing, she wrote it all down, together with her memoranda, in her house-keeping book, and handed it each morning to Madame Husson, who, after adjusting her spectacles on her thin nose, read as follows:

“ Bread four sous

“ Milk two sous

“ Butter eight sous

“ Malvina Lévesque got into trouble last year with Mathurin Poilu.

“ Leg of mutton.....twenty-five sous

“ Salt one sou

“ Rosalie Vatinel was seen in the Biboudet woods with Césaire Piénoir by Madame Onésime, the ironer, on July the 20th, about dusk.

“ Radishes one sou

“ Vinegar two sous

“ Oxalic acid.....two sous

“ Josephine Durdent, who is not believed to have committed a fault, although she corresponds with young Oportun, who is in service in Rouen, and who sent her a present of a cap by stage-coach.

“ Not one came out unscathed in this rigorous inquisition. Françoise inquired of every one, neighbors, drapers, the principal, the teaching Sisters at school, and gathered the slightest details.

“ As there is not a girl in the world about whom gossips have not found something to say, there was not found in all the countryside one young girl whose name was free from some slander.

“ But Madame Husson desired that the ‘ Rosière ’ of Gisors, like Cæsar’s wife, should be above suspicion, and she was horrified, saddened, and in despair at the record in her servant’s housekeeping account-book.

“ They then extended their circle of inquiries to the neighboring villages; but with no satisfaction.

“ They consulted the Mayor. His candidates failed. Those of Doctor Barbesol were equally unlucky, in spite of the exactness of his scientific vouchers.

“ But one morning, Françoise, on returning from one of her expeditions, said to her mistress:

“ ‘ You see, Madame, that if you wish to give a prize to any one, there is only Isidore in all the country round.’

“ Madame Husson remained thoughtful. She knew him well, this Isidore, the son of Virginie the green-grocer. His proverbial virtue had been the delight of Gisors for several years, and served as an entertaining theme of conversation in the town, and of amusement to the young girls, who loved to tease him. He was past twenty-one, was tall, awkward, slow, and timid; helped his mother in the business, and spent his days picking over fruit and vegetables, seated on a chair outside the door.

“ He had an abnormal dread of a petticoat, and cast down his eyes whenever a female customer looked at him smilingly; and this well-known timid-

ity made him the butt of all the wags in the country.

“ Bold words, coarse expressions, indecent allusions, brought the color to his cheeks so quickly that Doctor Barbesol had nicknamed him ‘ the thermometer of modesty.’ Was he as innocent as he looked? ill-natured people asked themselves. Was it the mere presentiment of unknown and shameful mysteries, or else indignation at the relations ordained as the concomitant of love, that so strongly affected the son of Virginie, the green-grocer? The urchins of the neighborhood, as they ran past the shop, would fling disgusting remarks at him just to see him cast down his eyes. The girls amused themselves by walking to and fro before him, cracking jokes that made him go into the store. The boldest among them teased him to his face just to have a laugh, to amuse themselves, made appointments with him and proposed all sorts of things.

“ So Madame Husson had become thoughtful; certainly Isidore was an exceptional case of notorious, unassailable virtue. No one among the most skeptical, most incredulous, would have been able, would have dared to suspect Isidore of the slightest infraction of any law of morality. He had never been seen in a café, never been observed at night on the street. He went to bed at eight o’clock and rose at four. He was perfection, a pearl.

“ But Madame Husson still hesitated. The idea of substituting a boy for a girl, a ‘ rosier ’ for a ‘ rosière ’ troubled her, worried her a little, and she resolved to consult the Abbé Malou.

“ The Abbé responded:

“ ‘ What do you desire to reward, Madame? It is virtue, is it not, and nothing but virtue? What

does it matter to you, therefore, if it is masculine or feminine? Virtue is eternal; it has neither sex nor country; it is virtue.'

"Thus encouraged, Madame Husson went to see the Mayor.

"He approved heartily.

" 'We will have a fine ceremony,' he said. 'And another year if we can find a girl as worthy as Isidore we will give the reward to her. It will even be a good example that we shall set to Nanterre. Let us not be exclusive; let us welcome all merit.'

"Isidore, who had been told about this, blushed deeply and seemed happy.

"The ceremony was fixed for the fifteenth of August, the festival of the Virgin Mary and of the Emperor Napoleon. The municipality had decided to make this an imposing ceremony and had built the platform on the Couronneaux, a delightful extension of the ramparts of the old citadel where I will take you presently.

"With the natural revulsion of public feeling, the virtue of Isidore, ridiculed hitherto, had suddenly become respected and envied, as it would bring him in five hundred francs besides a savings-bank book, a mountain of consideration, and glory enough and to spare. The girls now regretted their frivolity, their ridicule, their bold manners; and Isidore, although still modest and timid, had now a little contented air that bespoke his internal satisfaction.

"The evening before the fifteenth of August the entire Rue Dauphine was decorated with flags. Oh, I forgot to tell you why this street had been called Rue Dauphine.

"It seems that the wife or mother of the Dauphin, I do not remember which one, while visiting Gisors, had been fêted so much by the authorities that during a triumphal procession through the town she stopped before one of the houses in this street, halting the procession, and exclaimed:

" ' Oh, the pretty house! How I should like to go through it! To whom does it belong? ' "

" They told her the name of the owner, who was sent for and brought, proud and embarrassed, before the Princess. She alighted from her carriage, went into the house, wishing to go over it from top to bottom, and even shut herself in one of the rooms alone for a few seconds.

" When she came out the people, flattered at this honor paid to a citizen of Gisors, shouted: ' Long live the Dauphine! ' But a rhymester wrote some words to a refrain, and the street retained the title of her Royal Highness, for

" ' The princess, in a hurry,
Without bell, priest, or beadle,
But with some water only,
Had baptized it.' "

" But to come back to Isidore.

" They had scattered flowers all along the road as they do for processions at the Fête-Dieu, and the National Guard was present, acting on the orders of its chief, Commandant Desbarres, an old soldier of the Grand Army, who pointed with pride to the beard of a Cossack cut with a single sword-stroke from the chin of its owner by the Commandant, during the retreat in Russia, and which hung beside the frame containing the cross of the Legion of Honor presented to him by the Emperor himself.

“ The regiment that he commanded was, besides, a picked regiment celebrated all through the province, and the company of Grenadiers of Gisors was called on to attend all important ceremonies for a distance of fifteen to twenty leagues. The story goes that Louis-Philippe, while reviewing the militia of Eure, stopped in astonishment before the company from Gisors, exclaiming:

“ ‘ Oh, who are those splendid grenadiers? ’

“ ‘ The Grenadiers of Gisors,’ replied the General.

“ ‘ I might have known it,’ murmured the King.

“ So Commandant Desbarres came at the head of his men, preceded by the band, to get Isidore in his mother’s shop.

“ After a little air had been played by the band beneath the windows, the ‘ Rosier ’ himself appeared on the threshold. He was dressed in white duck from head to foot and wore a straw hat with a little bunch of orange blossoms as a cockade.

“ The question of his clothes had bothered Madame Husson a good deal, and she hesitated some time between the black coat of those who make their first communion and an entire white suit. But Françoise, her counselor, induced her to decide on the white suit, pointing out that the Rosier would look like a swan.

“ Behind him came his guardian, his godmother, Madame Husson, in triumph. She took his arm to go out of the shop, and the Mayor placed himself on the other side of the Rosier. The drums beat. Commandant Desbarres gave the order ‘ Present arms!’ The procession resumed its march toward the church, amid an immense crowd of people who had gathered from the neighboring districts.

“ After a short mass and an affecting discourse by Abbé Malou, they continued on their way to the Couronneaux, where the banquet was served in a tent.

“ Before taking their seats at table, the Mayor gave an address. This is it, word for word. I learned it by heart:

“ ‘ Young man, a woman of means, beloved by the poor and respected by the rich, Madame Husson, whom the whole country is thanking here, through me, had the idea, the happy and benevolent idea, of founding in this town a prize for virtue, which should serve as a valuable encouragement to the inhabitants of this beautiful country.

“ ‘ You, young man, are the first to be rewarded in this dynasty of goodness and chastity. Your name will remain at the head of this list of the most deserving; and your life, understand me, your whole life, must correspond to this happy commencement. To-day, in presence of this noble woman, of these soldier-citizens who have taken up their arms in your honor, in presence of this populace, affected, assembled to applaud you, or, rather, to applaud virtue, in your person, you make a solemn contract with the town, with all of us, to continue until your death the excellent example of your youth.

“ ‘ Do not forget, young man, that you are the first seed cast into this field of hope; give us the fruits that we expect of you.’

“ The Mayor advanced three steps, opened his arms, and pressed Isidore to his heart.

“ The ‘ Rosier ’ was sobbing without knowing why, from a confused emotion, from pride and a vague and happy feeling of tenderness.

“ Then the Mayor placed in one hand a silk purse in which gold jingled—five hundred francs in gold!—and in his other hand a savings-bank book. And he said in a solemn tone:

“ ‘ Homage, glory, and riches to virtue! ’

“ Commandant Desbarres shouted ‘ Bravo! ’ The grenadiers vociferated, and the crowd applauded.

“ Madame Husson wiped her eyes in her turn. Then they all sat down at the table where the banquet was served.

“ The repast was magnificent and seemed interminable. One course followed another; yellow cider and red wine in fraternal contact blended in the stomachs of the guests. The rattle of plates, the sound of voices and of music softly played made an incessant deep hum, and was dispersed abroad in the clear sky where the swallows were flying. Madame Husson occasionally readjusted her black wig, which would slip over on one side, and chatted with Abbé Malou. The Mayor, who was excited, talked politics with Commandant Desbarres, and Isidore ate and drank as if he had never eaten or drunk before. He helped himself repeatedly to all the dishes, becoming aware for the first time of the pleasure of having one’s belly full of good things, which tickle the palate in the first place. He had let out a reef in his belt, and, without speaking, and although he was a little uneasy at a winestain on his white waistcoat, he ceased eating in order to take up his glass and hold it to his mouth as long as possible, to enjoy the taste slowly.

“ It was time for the toasts. They were many and loudly applauded. Evening was approaching, and they had been at the table since noon. Fine,

milky vapors were already floating in the air in the valley, the light night-robe of streams and meadows; the sun neared the horizon; the cows were lowing in the distance amid the mists of the pasture. The feast was over. They returned to Gisors. The procession, now disbanded, walked in detachments. Madame Husson had taken Isidore's arm and was giving him a quantity of urgent, excellent advice.

"They stopped at the door of the fruit store, and the 'Rosier' was left at his mother's house. She had not come home yet. Having been invited by her family to celebrate her son's triumph, she had taken luncheon with her sister after having followed the procession as far as the banqueting tent.

"So Isidore remained alone in the shop, which was growing dark. He sat down on a chair, excited by the wine and by pride, and looked about him. Carrots, cabbages, and onions gave out their strong odor of vegetables in the closed room, that coarse smell of the garden blended with the sweet, penetrating odor of strawberries and the delicate, slight, evanescent fragrance of a basket of peaches.

"The 'Rosier' took one of these and ate it, although he was as full as an egg. Then, all at once, wild with joy, he began to dance about the store, and something rattled in his waistcoat.

"He was surprised and put his hands in his pockets and brought out the purse containing the five hundred francs, which he had forgotten in his agitation. Five hundred francs! What a fortune! He poured the gold pieces out on the counter and spread them out with his big hand with a slow, caressing touch so as to see them all at the same time. There were twenty-five, twenty-five round gold pieces, all gold! They glistened on the wood

in the dim light, and he counted them over and over, one by one. Then he put them back in the purse, which he replaced in his pocket.

“Who will ever know or who can tell what a terrible conflict took place in the soul of the ‘Rosier’ between good and evil, the tumultuous attack of Satan, his artifices, the temptations which he offered to the timid, virgin heart? What suggestions, what imaginations, what desires were not invented by the Evil One to excite and destroy this chosen one? He seized his hat, Madame Husson’s saint, his hat which still bore the little bunch of orange blossoms, and going out through the alley at the back of the house, he disappeared in the darkness.

“Virginie, the fruiterer, on learning that her son had returned, went home at once, and found the house empty. She waited, without thinking anything about it at first; but at the end of a quarter of an hour she made inquiries. The neighbors had seen Isidore come home and had not seen him go out again. They began to look for him, but could not find him. His mother, in alarm, went to the Mayor. The Mayor knew nothing except that he had left him at the door of his home. Madame Husson had just retired when they informed her that her *protégé* had disappeared. She immediately put on her wig, dressed herself, and went to Virginie’s house. Virginie, whose plebeian soul was readily moved, was weeping copiously amid her cabbages, carrots, and onions.

“They feared some accident had befallen him. What could it be? Commandant Desbarres notified the police, who made a circuit of the town, and on the highroad of Pontoise they found the little bunch

of orange blossoms. It was placed on a table around which the authorities were deliberating. The 'Rosier' must have been the victim of some stratagem, some trick, some jealousy; but in what way? What means had been employed to kidnap this innocent creature, and with what object?

"Weary of looking for him without any result, Virginie, alone, remained watching and weeping.

"The following evening, when the coach passed by on its return from Paris, Gisors learned with astonishment that its 'Rosier' had stopped the vehicle at a distance of about two hundred meters from the town, had climbed up on it and paid his fare, handing over a gold piece and receiving the change, and that he had quietly alighted in the heart of the great city.

"There was great excitement all through the countryside. Letters passed between the Mayor and the chief of police in Paris, but brought no result.

"The days followed one another; a week had passed.

"Now, one morning, Doctor Barbesol, who had gone out early, perceived sitting on a doorstep a man dressed in a grimy linen suit, who was sleeping with his head leaning against the wall. He approached him and recognized Isidore. He tried to rouse him, but did not succeed in doing so. The ex-'Rosier' was in that profound, invincible sleep that is alarming, and the doctor, in surprise, went to seek assistance to help him in carrying the young man to Boncheval's drug-store. When they lifted him up they found an empty bottle under him, and when the doctor sniffed at it he declared that it had contained brandy. That gave a suggestion as to

what treatment he would require. They succeeded in rousing him.

"Isidore was drunk, drunk and degraded by a week of guzzling, drunk and so disgusting that a ragman would not have touched him. His beautiful white duck suit was a gray rag, greasy, muddy, torn, and destroyed, and he smelled of the gutter and of vice.

"He was washed, sermonized, shut up, and did not leave the house for four days. He seemed ashamed and repentant. They could not find on him either his purse containing the five hundred francs or the bank-book, or even his silver watch, a sacred heirloom left by his father, the fruiterer.

"On the fifth day he ventured into the Rue Dauphine. Curious glances followed him, and he walked along with a furtive expression in his eyes and his head bent down. As he got outside the town toward the valley they lost sight of him; but two hours later he returned laughing and rolling against the walls. He was drunk, absolutely drunk.

"Nothing could cure him.

"Driven from home by his mother, he became a wagon-driver, and drove the charcoal-wagons for the Pougrisel firm, which is still in existence.

"His reputation as a drunkard became so well known and spread so far that even at Evreux they talked of Madame Husson's 'Rosier,' and the sots of the countryside have been given that nickname.

"A good deed is never lost."

Doctor Marambot rubbed his hands as he finished his story. I asked:

"Did you know the 'Rosier'?"

"Yes, I had the honor of closing his eyes."

“ Of what did he die? ”

“ An attack of delirium tremens, of course.”

We had arrived at the old citadel, a pile of ruined walls dominated by the enormous tower of St. Thomas of Canterbury and the one called the Prisoner's tower.

Marambot told me the story of this prisoner who, with the aid of a nail, covered the walls of his dungeon with sculptures, tracing the reflections of the sun as it glanced through the narrow slit of a loop-hole.

I also learned that Clothaire II had given the patrimony of Gisors to his cousin Saint Romain, Bishop of Rouen; that Gisors ceased to be the capital of the whole of Vexin after the treaty of Saint-Clair-sur-Epte, that the town is the chief strategic center of all that portion of France, and that in consequence of this advantage she was taken and retaken over and over again. At the command of William the Red, the eminent engineer, Robert de Bellesme constructed there a powerful fortress that was attacked later by Louis le Gros, then by the Norman barons, was defended by Robert de Candos, was finally ceded to Louis le Gros by Geoffrey Plantagenet, was retaken by the English in consequence of the treachery of the Knights Templars, was contested by Philippe-Augustus and Richard the Lion-hearted, was set on fire by Edward III of England, who could not take the castle, was again taken by the English in 1419, restored later to Charles VII by Richard de Marbury, was taken by the Duke of Calabria, occupied by the League, inhabited by Henry IV, etc., etc.

And Marambot, eager and almost eloquent, continued.

“ What beggars, those English! And what sots, my boy; they are all ‘ Rosiers,’ those hypocrites! ”

Then, after a silence, stretching out his arm toward the tiny river that glistened in the meadows, he said:

“ Did you know that Henry Monnier was one of the most untiring fishermen on the banks of the Epte? ”

“ No, I did not know it.”

“ And Bouffé, my boy, Bouffé was a painter on glass.”

“ You are joking! ”

“ No, indeed. How is it you do not know these things? ”



THE KISS*



Y LITTLE DARLING: So you are crying from morning until night, and from night until morning, because your husband leaves you; you do not know what to do and so you ask your old aunt for advice; you must consider her quite an expert. I don't know as much as you think I do, and yet I am not entirely ignorant of the art of loving, or, rather, of making one's self loved, in which you are a little lacking. I can admit that at my age.

You say that you are all attention, love, kisses, and caresses for him. Perhaps that is the very trouble; I think you kiss him too much.

My dear, we have in our hands the most terrible power in the world: LOVE.

Man is gifted with physical strength, and he exercises force. Woman is gifted with charm, and she rules with caresses. It is our weapon, formi-

*This story appeared in the *Gaulois* in November, 1882, under the pseudonym of "MAUFRIGNEUSE."

dable and invincible, but we should know how to use it.

Know well that we are the mistresses of the world! To tell the history of Love from the beginning of the world would be to tell the history of man himself. Everything springs from it, the arts, great events, custom, wars, the overthrow of empires.

In the Bible you find Delila, Judith; in fables we find Omphale, Helen; in history, the Sabines, Cleopatra, and many others.

Therefore we reign supreme, all-powerful. But, like kings, we must make use of delicate diplomacy.

Love, my dear, is made up of imperceptible sensations. We know that it is as strong as death, but also as frail as glass. The slightest shock breaks it, and our power crumbles, and we are never able to raise it again.

We have the power of making ourselves adored, but we lack one tiny thing, the understanding of the various kinds of caresses. In embraces we lose the sentiment of delicacy, while the man over whom we rule remains master of himself, capable of judging the foolishness of certain words. Take care, my dear; that is the defect in our armor. It is our Achilles' heel.

Do you know whence comes our real power? From the kiss, the kiss alone! When we know how to hold out and give up our lips, we can become queens.

The kiss is only a preface, however, but a charming preface. More charming than the realization itself. A preface which can always be read over again, whereas one cannot always read over . . . the book.

Yes, the meeting of lips is the most perfect, the most divine sensation given to human beings, the supreme limit of happiness. It is in the kiss alone that one sometimes seems to feel this union of souls after which we strive, the intermingling of hearts, as it were.

Do you remember the verses of Sully-Prudhomme:

Caresses are nothing but anxious bliss,
Vain trials of love to join souls by the body.

One caress alone gives this deep sensation of two beings welded into one—it is the kiss. No violent delirium of complete possession is worth this trembling approach of the lips, this first moist and fresh contact, and then the long, lingering, motionless rapture.

Therefore, my dear, the kiss is our strongest weapon, but we must take care not to dull it. Do not forget that its value is only relative, purely conventional. It continually changes according to circumstances, the state of expectancy and the ecstasy of the mind. I will call attention to one example.

Another poet, François Coppée, has written a line which we all remember, a line which we find delightful, which moves our very hearts.

After describing the expectancy of a lover, waiting in a room one winter's evening, his anxiety, his nervous impatience, the terrible fear of not seeing her, he describes the arrival of the beloved woman, who at last enters hurriedly, out of breath, bringing with her part of the winter breeze, and he exclaims:

“Oh! the taste of the kisses first snatched through the veil.”

Is that not a line of exquisite sentiment, a delicate and charming observation, a perfect truth! All those who have hastened to a clandestine meeting, whom passion has thrown into the arms of a man, well do they know these first delicious kisses through the veil; and they tremble at the memory of them. And yet their sole charm lies in the circumstances, from being late, from the anxious expectancy; but from the purely—or, rather, impurely, if you prefer—sensual point of view, they are detestable.

Think! Outside it is cold. The young woman has walked quickly; the veil is moist from her cold breath. Little drops of water shine in the lace. The lover seizes her and presses his burning lips to her liquid breath. The moist veil, which discolors and carries the dreadful odor of chemical dye, penetrates into the young man's mouth, moistens his mustache. He does not taste the lips of his beloved, he tastes the dye of this lace moistened with cold breath. And yet, like the poet, we would all exclaim:

“Oh! the taste of the kisses first snatched through the veil.”

Therefore, the value of this caress being entirely a matter of convention, we must be careful not to abuse it.

Well, my dear, I have several times noticed that you are very clumsy. However, you were not alone in that fault; the majority of women lose their authority by abusing the kiss with untimely kisses. When they feel that their husband or their lover is a little tired, at those times, when the heart as well as the body needs rest, instead of understanding what is going on within him, they persist in giving

inopportune caresses, tire him by the insistence of begging lips and give caresses lavished with neither rhyme nor reason.

Trust in the advice of my experience. First, never kiss your husband in public, in the train, at the restaurant. It is bad taste; do not give in to your desires. He would feel ridiculous and would never forgive you.

Beware of useless kisses lavished in intimacy. I am sure that you abuse them. For instance, I remember one day that you did something quite shocking. Probably you do not remember it.

All three of us were together in the drawing-room, and, as you did not stand on ceremony before me, your husband was holding you on his knees and kissing you at great length on the neck, the lips, and throat. Suddenly you exclaimed: "Oh! the fire!" You had been paying no attention to it, and it was almost out. A few lingering embers were glowing on the hearth. Then he rose, ran to the woodbox, from which he dragged two enormous logs with great difficulty, when you came to him with begging lips, murmuring:

"Kiss me!" He turned his head with difficulty and tried to hold up the logs at the same time. Then you gently and slowly placed your mouth on that of the poor fellow, who remained with his neck out of joint, his sides twisted, his arms almost dropping off, trembling with fatigue and tired from his desperate effort. And you kept drawing out this torturing kiss, without seeing or understanding. Then when you freed him, you began to grumble: "How badly you kiss!" No wonder!

Oh, take care of that! We all have this foolish habit, this unconscious need of choosing the most

inconvenient moments. When he is carrying a glass of water, when he is putting on his shoes, when he is tying his scarf—in short, when he finds himself in any uncomfortable position—then is the time which we choose for a caress which makes him stop for a whole minute in the middle of a gesture with the sole desire of getting rid of us!

Do not think that this criticism is insignificant. Love, my dear, is a delicate thing. The least little thing offends it; know that everything depends on the tact of our caresses. An ill-placed kiss may do any amount of harm.

Try following my advice.

Your old aunt,

COLLETTE.



CARESSES *



HAT you are asking of me revolts and disgusts me. No, my friend, do not think of it again. It is as if God—for I believe in God—had tried to spoil everything that He made good by adding to it something that is horrible. He has given us Love, the sweetest thing in the world, but, finding it too beautiful and pure for us, He created the senses, the ignoble, foul, revolting, brutal senses, fashioning them as if in derision, mingling them with the offal of the body, conceiving them in such a way that we cannot think of them without blushing, and can speak of them only in a whisper. Their frightful act is enveloped with shame. It hides itself, it revolts the soul, offends the eyes, and, dishonored by morality and pursued by the law, it is committed in the dark, as if it were a crime.

*(These two letters, written on Japanese rice-paper, were found in a small portfolio of Russian leather, under a *prie-Dieu* of the Church of the Madeleine, last Sunday, after the one o'clock mass, by

MAUFRIGNEUSE.)

Never again speak to me of that, never.

I do not know whether I love you, but I know that I am content to be with you, that the glance of your eye is sweet to me, and that your voice caresses my heart. From the day on which you would have obtained from my weakness that which you desire, you would become hateful to me. The delicate bond that attaches us to each other would be broken. There would be an abyss of infamies between us.

Let us remain such as we are. And . . . love me if you wish, I permit you.

Your friend,

GENEVIÈVE.

MADAME: Will you permit me, in turn, to talk with you brutally, without any *galanterie*, as I would talk with a friend about to be ordained?

I also do not know whether I love you. I should not really know it until after this thing which so revolts you.

Have you forgotten the verses of De Musset:

I still remember those terrible spasms,
Those mute kisses, those ardent muscles,
This absorbed being, livid and clenching the teeth;
These moments, if they are not divine, are horrible.

We also experience this sensation of horror and of insurmountable disgust when, driven by the surging of the blood, we indulge in chance unions. But when a woman is for us the being of our choice, of enduring charm and infinite seduction, such as you are for me, the caress becomes the most ardent, most complete, and most infinite of pleasures.

The caress, Madame, is the proof of love. If our ardor dies down after the embrace, we have been mistaken. If it increases, we love each other.

A philosopher who did not practise these doctrines has put us on our guard against this trap of nature. Nature wants beings, he says, and, in order to force us to create them, she has placed the double bait of love and voluptuousness beside this trap. As soon as we have allowed ourselves to be caught, as soon as the madness of the moment has passed, an immense sadness takes hold of us, for we see the ruse that had deceived us, we see, we feel, we touch, the secret and hidden reason that has urged us on in spite of ourselves.

This is very often true. And then we arise disheartened. Nature has conquered us, and has flung us, at her will, into arms that were opening because she wanted them to open.

Yes, I know the cold and violent kisses pressed upon unknown lips, the fixed and ardent look of eyes that one never before has seen and never will see again, and more that I cannot tell, all that which fills the soul with a bitter melancholy.

But when the kind of affection which one calls love has enveloped two beings, when they have thought of each other for a long time and always, when memory is always awake during absence, recalling the lineaments of the face, the smile, the tone of the voice; when the absent but always visible figure has taken complete possession of one, is it not natural that the arms should finally open, that the lips should meet and the bodies unite?

Have you never felt the desire for a kiss? Tell me, whether lips do not call for lips, and whether the clear look, which seems to penetrate into the

veins, does not call forth furious and irresistible desire?

True, this is the snare, the foul snare, as you say. What is that to me? I know it, I fall into it, and I love it. Nature gives us the caress in order to hide her ruse from us, and to compel us to perpetuate the generations, in spite of ourselves. Well, then, let us filch the caress from her, let us make it our own, refine it, change it, idealize it, if you will. Let us, in turn, deceive Nature the deceiver.

Let us do more than she intended, more than she could teach or dare to teach us. Let the caress be like some precious material that has come raw out of the earth, and let us work and perfect it, without regard to the original design, the veiled will of that which you call God. And, as it is Thought that throws the gleam of poetry over everything, so let us poetize it, Madame, even to its terrible brutalities, its most impure combinations, its most monstrous inventions.

Let us love the caress, savory like wine that intoxicates, like the ripe fruit which perfumes the mouth, like every pleasure which penetrates our body. Let us love the flesh because it is beautiful and white, and firm, round, and soft, delicious to the lip and to the touch of the hand.

Artists, in their search for the rarest and most pure form after which to model the cups from which art should drink to intoxication, have chosen the curve of the breasts, whose flower is like that of the rose.

In a learned book, called the *Dictionary of Medical Sciences*, I have read this definition of a woman's neck, which one might ascribe to Joseph Prudhomme, turned physician: "The breast of woman

may be considered as an object of both utility and pleasure."

Let us suppress, if you will, the utility and retain only the pleasure. Would it have this adorable form, which irresistibly invites the caress, if it were destined only to suckle babes?

Yes, Madame, let the moralists preach modesty to us, and the physicians prudence; let the poets—those deceivers who are ever themselves deceived—sing of the chaste union of souls and of immaterial pleasures; leave the plain women to do their duties, and the men of reason to attend to their useless affairs; leave the *doctrinaires* with their doctrines, the preachers with their commandments, and let us love, above all, the caress which intoxicates, maddens, enervates, exhausts, and reanimates; which is sweeter than perfumes, lighter than the breeze, more keen than wounds, rapid and devouring; which causes one to pray, to weep, to sigh, to cry, and to commit all the crimes and all the acts of courage.

Let us love it, not tranquilly, normally, or legally; but violently, furiously, and immoderately. Let us search for it as one searches for gold or diamonds, for it is worth more, being inestimable and fleeting. Let us pursue it unceasingly, and let us die for it and through it.

And, if you wish me to tell you a truth, Madame, which I think you will not find in any book, it is this—that the only happy women on this earth are those who do not lack for caresses. These live without a care, without torturing thoughts, without any other desire than that of the next kiss, which will be as delicious and soothing as the last one was.

The others, those for whom caresses are measured, or incomplete, or rare, are harried by a thou-

sand miserable disquietudes, by desire for money or vanity, by all the occurrences that are turned into sorrows.

But the women caressed to satiety have need of nothing, they desire nothing, and regret nothing. They dream, calm and smiling, hardly touched by that which would be a catastrophe for others, for the caress takes the place of everything, heals everything, and consoles for everything.

And there is still so much more that I could say!

HENRI.



MY WIFE



It had been a stag dinner. These men still came together once in a while without their wives, as they had done when they were bachelors. They would eat for a long time, drink for a long time; they would talk of everything, stir up those old and joyful memories which bring a smile to the lip and a tremor to the heart. One of them was saying: "Georges, do you remember our excursion to Saint Germain with those two little girls from Montmartre?"

"I should say I do!"

And a little detail here or there would be remembered, and all these things brought joy to the hearts.

The talk turned to marriage, and each one said with a sincere air: "Oh, if it were to be done over again! . . ." Georges Duportin added: "It's strange how easily one falls into it. You have fully decided never to marry; and then, in the spring-time, you go to the

country; the weather is warm; the summer is beautiful; the fields are full of flowers; you meet a young girl at some friend's house . . . crash! all is over. You return married!"

Pierre L  toile exclaimed: "Correct! that is exactly my case, only there were some peculiar incidents . . ."

His friend interrupted him: "As for you, you have no cause to complain. You have the most charming wife in the world, pretty, amiable, perfect! You are undoubtedly the happiest one of us all."

The other one continued: "It's not my fault."

"How so?"

"It is true that I have a perfect wife; but I certainly married her much against my will."

"Nonsense!"

"Yes . . . this is the adventure. I was thirty-five, and I had no more idea of marrying than I had of hanging myself. Young girls seemed to me to be inane, and I loved pleasure."

"During the month of May I was invited to the wedding of my cousin, Simon d'Erabel, in Normandy. It was a regular Normandy wedding. We sat down at the table at five o'clock in the evening, and at eleven o'clock we were still eating. I had been paired off, for the occasion, with a Mademoiselle Dumoulin, daughter of a retired colonel, a young, blond, soldierly person, well formed, frank, and talkative. She took complete possession of me for the whole day, dragged me into the park, made me dance willy-nilly, bored me to death. I said to myself: 'That's all very well for to-day, but tomorrow I'll get out. That's all there is to it!'

"Toward eleven o'clock at night the women retired to their rooms; the men stayed, smoking while

they drank, or drinking while they smoked, whichever you will.

“ Through the open window we could see the country folks dancing. Farmers and peasant girls were jumping about in a circle, bawling at the top of their lungs a dance air which was feebly accompanied by two violins and a clarinet. The wild song of the peasants often completely drowned the sound of the instruments; and the weak music, interrupted by the screeching voices, seemed to come to us in little fragments of scattered notes. Two enormous casks, surrounded by flaming torches, contained drinks for the crowd. Two men were kept busy washing the glasses or the bowls in a bucket and immediately holding them under the spigots, from which flowed the red stream of wine or the golden stream of pure cider; and the parched dancers, the old ones quietly, the girls panting, came up, stretched out their arms and grasped some receptacle, threw back their heads and poured down their throats the drink which they preferred. On a table were bread, butter, cheese, and sausages. Each one would step up from time to time and swallow a mouthful; and under the starlit sky, this healthy and violent exercise was a pleasing sight, and made one also feel like drinking from these enormous casks and eating the crisp bread and butter with a raw onion.

“ A mad desire seized me to take part in this merrymaking, and I left my companions. I must admit that I was probably a little tipsy; but I was soon entirely so.

“ I grabbed the hand of a big, panting peasant woman, and I jumped her about until I was out of breath.

“ Then I drank some wine and reached for another girl. In order to refresh myself afterward, I swallowed a bowlful of cider, and I began to bounce around as if possessed.

“ I was very light on my feet; the boys, delighted, were watching me and trying to imitate me; the girls all wished to dance with me, and jumped about heavily with the grace of cows.

“ After each dance I drank a glass of wine or a glass of cider, and toward two o'clock in the morning I was so drunk that I could hardly stand up.

“ I realized my condition, and tried to reach my room. Everybody was asleep, and the house was silent and dark.

“ I had no matches and everybody was in bed. As soon as I reached the vestibule I began to feel dizzy; I had a lot of trouble to find the banisters; at last, by accident, my hand came in contact with it, and I sat down on the first step of the stairs in order to try to gather my scattered wits.

“ My room was on the second floor; it was the third door to the left. Fortunately I had not forgotten that. Armed with this knowledge, I arose, not without difficulty, and I began to ascend, step by step; in my hands I firmly gripped the iron railing in order not to fall, and took great pains to make no noise.

“ Only three or four times did my foot miss the steps, and I went down on my knees; but thanks to the energy of my arms and the strength of my will, I avoided falling completely.

“ At last I reached the second floor, and I set out in my journey along the hall, feeling my way by the walls. I felt one door; I counted: ‘ One ’; but a sudden dizziness made me lose my hold on the

wall, make a strange turn and fall up against the other wall. I wished to turn in a straight line. The crossing was long and full of hardships. At last I reached the shore, and, prudently, I began to travel along again, until I met another door. In order to be sure to make no mistake, I again counted out loud: 'Two.' I started out on my walk again. At last I found the third floor. I said: 'Three, that's my room,' and I turned the knob. The door opened. Notwithstanding my befuddled state, I thought: 'Since the door opens, this must be home.' After softly closing the door, I stepped out in the darkness. I bumped against something soft: my easy-chair. I immediately stretched myself out on it.

"In my condition it would not have been wise to look for my bureau, my candle, my matches. It would have taken me at least two hours. It would probably have taken me that long also to undress; and even then I might not have succeeded. I gave it up.

"I only took my shoes off; I unbuttoned my waistcoat, which was choking me, I loosened my trousers and went to sleep.

"This undoubtedly lasted for a long time. I was suddenly awakened by a deep voice which was saying: "What, you lazy girl, still in bed? It's ten o'clock!"

"A woman's voice answered: 'Already! I was so tired yesterday.'

"In bewilderment, I wondered what this dialogue meant. Where was I? What had I done? My mind was wandering, still surrounded by a heavy fog. The first voice continued: 'I'm going to raise your curtains.'

" I heard steps approaching me. Completely at a loss what to do, I sat up. Then a hand was placed on my head. I started. The voice asked: ' Who is there? ' I took good care not to answer. A furious grasp seized me. I in turn seized him, and a terrific struggle ensued. We were rolling around, knocking over the furniture and crashing against the walls. A woman's voice was shrieking: ' Help! help! '

" Servants, neighbors, frightened women, crowded around us. The blinds were open and the shades drawn. I was struggling with Colonel Dumoulin!

" I had slept beside his daughter's bed!

" When we were separated, I escaped to my room, dumfounded. I locked myself in and sat down with my feet on a chair, for my shoes had been left in the young girl's room.

" I heard a great noise through the whole house, doors being opened and closed, whisperings and rapid steps.

" After half an hour some one knocked on my door. I cried: ' Who is there? ' It was my uncle, the bridegroom's father. I opened the door.

" He was pale and furious, and he treated me harshly: ' You have come here and acted like a rascal, do you hear? ' Then he added more gently: ' But, you young fool, why the devil did you let yourself get caught at ten o'clock in the morning? You go to sleep like a log in that room, instead of leaving immediately . . . immediately after.'

" I exclaimed: ' But, uncle, I assure you that nothing has happened. . . . I was drunk and got into the wrong room.'

" He shrugged his shoulders: ' Don't talk non-

sense.' I raised my hand, exclaiming: 'I swear to you on my honor.' My uncle continued: 'Yes, perfectly correct. It's your duty to say that.'

"I in turn grew angry, and told him the whole unfortunate occurrence. He looked at me with a bewildered expression, not knowing what to believe. Then he went out to confer with the Colonel.

"I heard that a kind of jury of the mothers had been formed, to which were submitted the different phases of the situation.

"He came back an hour later, sat down with the dignity of a judge, and began: 'No matter what may be the situation, I can see only one way out of it for you; it is to marry Mademoiselle Dumoulin.'

"I bounded out of the chair, crying: 'Never! never!'

"Gravely he asked: 'Well, what do you expect to do?'

"I answered simply: 'Why—leave, as soon as my shoes are returned to me.'

"My uncle continued: 'Please do not jest. The Colonel has decided to blow your brains out as soon as he sees you. And you may be sure that he does not threaten idly. I spoke of a duel, and he answered: "No, I tell you that I will blow his brains out."

"Let us now examine the question from another point of view. Either you have seduced this child—and then it's your fault, my boy; one should not go to a young girl—or otherwise, being drunk, as you say, you made a mistake. There again, it's so much the worse for you. You shouldn't get yourself into such foolish situations. Whatever you may say, the poor girl's reputation is lost, for a drunk-

ard's excuses are never believed. The only real victim in the matter is she. Think it over.'

"He went away, while I cried after him: 'Say what you will, I'll not marry her!'

"I stayed alone for another hour. Then my aunt came. She was crying. She used every argument. No one believed my story. They could not imagine that this young girl could have forgotten to lock her door in a house full of company. The Colonel had struck her. She had been crying the whole morning. It was a terrible and unforgettable scandal. And my good aunt added: 'Ask for her hand, anyhow; we may, perhaps, find some way out of it when we are drawing up the papers.'

"This prospect relieved me. And I agreed to write my proposal. An hour later I left for Paris. The following day I was informed that I had been accepted.

"Then, in three weeks, before I had been able to find any excuse, the banns were published, the announcement sent out, the contract signed; and one Monday morning I found myself in a church, beside a weeping young girl, after telling the magistrate that I consented to take her as my companion—for better or for worse.

"I had not seen her since my adventure, and I glanced at her out of the corner of my eye with a certain malevolent surprise. However, she was not ugly—far from it. I said to myself: 'There is some one who won't laugh every day.'

"She did not look at me once until the evening, and she did not say a single word.

"Toward the middle of the night I entered the bridal chamber with the full intention of letting her know my resolutions, for I was now the mas-

ter. I found her sitting in an armchair, fully dressed, pale, and with red eyes. As soon as I entered she arose and came slowly toward me, saying: 'Monsieur, I am ready to do whatever you may order. I will kill myself if you so desire.'

"The Colonel's daughter was as pretty as she could be in this heroic rôle. I kissed her; it was my privilege. .

"I soon saw that I had not been robbed. I have now been married five years. I do not regret it in the least."

Pierre Létoile was silent. His companions were laughing. One of them said: "Marriage is indeed a lottery; you must never choose your numbers. Those which come to you by chance are the best."

Another one added as conclusion: "Yes, but do not forget that the God of drunkards chose for Pierre."



ALEXANDRE



AT four o'clock that day, as on every other day, Alexandre rolled the three-wheeled chair for cripples up to the door of the little house; then, in obedience to the doctor's orders, he would push his old and infirm mistress about until six o'clock.

When he had placed the light vehicle against the step, just at the place where the old lady could most easily enter it, he went into the house; and soon a furious, hoarse old soldier's voice was heard cursing inside the house: it issued from the master, the retired ex-captain of infantry, Joseph Maramballe.

Then could be heard the noise of doors being slammed, chairs being pushed about, and hasty footsteps; then nothing more. After a few seconds, Alexandre reappeared on the threshold, supporting with all his strength Madame Maramballe, who was exhausted from the exertion of descending the stairs. When she was at last settled in the rolling

chair, Alexandre passed behind it, grasped the handle, and set out toward the river.

Thus they crossed the little town every day amid the respectful greeting of all. These bows were perhaps meant as much for the servant as for the mistress, for if she was loved and esteemed by all, this old trooper, with his long, white, patriarchal beard, was considered a model domestic.

The July sun was beating down unmercifully on the street, bathing the low houses in its crude and burning light. Dogs were sleeping on the sidewalk in the shade of the houses, and Alexandre, a little out of breath, hastened his footsteps in order sooner to arrive at the avenue which leads to the water.

Madame Maramballe was already slumbering under her white parasol, the point of which sometimes grazed along the man's impassive face. As soon as they had reached the Allée des Tilleuls, she awoke in the shade of the trees, and she said in a kindly voice: "Go more slowly, my poor boy; you will kill yourself in this heat."

Along this path, completely covered by arched linden trees, the Mavettek flowed in its winding bed bordered by willows.

The gurgling of the eddies and the splashing of the little waves against the rocks lent to the walk the charming music of babbling water and the freshness of damp air. Madame Maramballe inhaled with deep delight the humid charm of this spot and then murmured: "Ah! that's better now! But he wasn't in good humor to-day."

Alexandre answered: "No, Madame."

For thirty-five years he had been in the service of this couple, first as officer's orderly, then as simple valet who did not wish to leave his masters; and

for the last six years, every afternoon, he had been rolling his mistress around through the narrow paths of the town. From this long and devoted service, and then from this daily *tête-à-tête*, a kind of familiarity arose between the old lady and the devoted servant, affectionate on her part, deferential on his.

They talked over the advance of the house exactly as between equals. Their principal subject of conversation and of worry was the bad disposition of the Captain, soured by a long career which had begun with promise, run along without promotion, and ended without glory.

Madame Maramballe continued: "He certainly was not in good humor to-day. This happens too often since he has left the service."

And Alexandre, with a sigh, completed his mistress's thoughts: "Oh, Madame might say that it happens every day and that it also happened before leaving the army."

"That is true. But the poor man has been so unfortunate. He began with a brave deed, which obtained for him the Legion of Honor at the age of twenty; and then from twenty to fifty he has not been able to rise higher than captain, whereas at the beginning he expected to retire at least with the rank of colonel."

"Madame might also admit that it was his fault. If he had not always been as gentle as a whip, his superiors would have loved and protected him better. Harshness is of no use; one should try to please if one wishes to advance. As far as his treatment of us is concerned, it is also our fault, since we are willing to remain with him, but with others it's different."

Madame Maramballe was thinking. Oh, for how many years had she thus been thinking of the brutality of her husband, whom she had married long ago because he was a handsome officer, decorated quite young, and, so they said, full of promise! What mistakes one makes in life!

She murmured: "Let us stop a while, my poor Alexandre, and rest on that bench."

It was a little worm-eaten bench, placed at a turn in the alley. Every time they came in this direction Alexandre was accustomed to making a short pause on this seat.

He sat down, and with a proud and familiar gesture he took his beautiful white beard in his hand, and, closing his fingers over it, ran them down to the point, which he held for a minute at the pit of his stomach, as if once more to verify the length of this growth.

Madame Maramballe continued: "I married him; it is only just and natural that I should bear his injustice; but what I do not understand is why you also should have supported it, my good Alexandre!"

He merely shrugged his shoulders and answered: "Oh! I—Madame."

She added: "Really. I have often wondered. When I married him you were his orderly and you could hardly do otherwise than endure him. But why did you remain with us, who pay you so little and who treat you so badly, when you could have done as every one else does: settle down, marry, have a family?"

He answered: "Oh, Madame! with me it's different."

Then he was silent; but he kept pulling his beard

as if he were ringing a bell within him, as if he were trying to pull it out, and he rolled his eyes like a man who is greatly embarrassed.

Madame Maramballe was following her own train of thought: "You are not a peasant. You have an education . . ."

He interrupted her proudly: "I studied surveying, Madame."

"Then why did you stay with us, and blast your life?"

He stammered: "That's it! that's it! it's the fault of my disposition."

"How so, of your disposition?"

"Yes, when I become attached to a person I become attached to him, that's all."

She began to laugh: "You are not going to try to tell me that Maramballe's sweet disposition caused you to become attached to him for life."

He was fidgeting around on his bench, visibly embarrassed, and he muttered behind his long beard: "It was not he, it was you!"

The old lady, who had a sweet face, with a snowy line of curly white hair between her forehead and her bonnet, turned around in her chair and observed her servant with a surprised look, exclaiming: "I, my poor Alexandre! How so?"

He began to look up in the air, then to one side, then toward the distance, turning his head as do timid people when forced to admit shameful secrets. At last he exclaimed, with the courage of a trooper who is ordered to the line of fire: "You see, it's this way—the first time I brought a letter to Mademoiselle from the Lieutenant, Mademoiselle gave me a franc and a smile, and it was all decided."

Not understanding well, she questioned him: "Explain yourself."

Then he cried out, like a malefactor who is admitting a fatal crime: "I had a sentiment for Madame! There!"

She answered nothing, stopped looking at him, hung her head, and thought. She was good, full of justice, gentleness, reason, and tenderness. In a second she saw the immense devotion of this poor creature, who had given up everything in order to live beside her, without saying anything. And she felt like weeping. Then, with a sad but not angry expression, she said: "Let us return home."

He arose, passed behind the rolling-chair, and began to push it.

As they approached the village they saw Captain Maramballe coming toward them. As soon as he joined them he asked his wife, with a visible desire of getting angry. "What have we for dinner?"

"Some chicken with flageolets."

He lost his temper: "Chicken! chicken! always chicken! By all that's holy, I've had enough chicken! Have you no ideas in your head, that you make me eat chicken every day?"

She answered, in a resigned tone: "But, my dear, you know that the doctor has ordered it for you. It's the best thing for your stomach. If your stomach were well, I could give you many things which I do not dare serve to you now."

Then, exasperated, he planted himself in front of Alexandre, exclaiming: "Well, if my stomach is out of order it's the fault of that brute. For thirty-five years he has been poisoning me with his abominable cooking."

Madame Maramballe suddenly turned about completely, in order to see the old domestic. Their eyes met, and in this single glance they both said: "Thank you!" to each other.



THE ENGLISHMAN OF ETRETAT



GREAT English poet has just crossed over to France in order to greet Victor Hugo. All the newspapers are full of his name, and he is the great topic of conversation in all drawing-rooms. Fifteen years ago I had occasion several times to meet Algernon Charles Swinburne. I will attempt to show him just as I saw him and to give an idea of the strange impression he made on me, which will remain with me throughout time.

I believe it was in 1867 or in 1868 that an unknown young Englishman came to Étretat and bought a little hut hidden under great trees. It was said that he lived there, always alone, in a strange manner; and he aroused the inimical surprise of the natives, for the inhabitants were sneaking and foolishly ill-disposed, as they always are in little towns.

They declared that this fantastic Englishman ate nothing but boiled, roasted, or stewed monkey; that he would see no one; that he talked to himself hours at a time, and many other surprising things that made people think that he was different from other men. They were surprised that he should live alone with a monkey. Had it been a cat or a dog they would have said nothing. But a monkey! Was that not frightful? What savage tastes the man must have!

I knew this young man only from seeing him in the streets. He was short, plump without being fat, mild-looking, and he wore a little blond mustache, which was almost invisible.

Chance brought us together. This savage had amiable and pleasing manners; but he was one of those strange Englishmen that one meets here and there throughout the world.

Endowed with a remarkable intelligence, he seemed to live in a fantastic dream, as Edgar Poe must have lived. He had translated into English a volume of strange Icelandic legends, which I ardently desired to see translated into French. He loved the supernatural, the dismal and grewsome; but he spoke of the most marvelous things with a calmness that was typically English, to which his gentle and quiet voice gave a semblance of reality that was maddening.

Full of a haughty disdain for the world, with its conventions, prejudices, and code of morality, he had nailed to his house a name that was boldly impudent. The keeper of a lonely inn who would write on his door: "Travelers murdered here!" could not make a more sinister jest. I never had penetrated within his dwelling, when one day I re-

ceived an invitation to luncheon, following an accident that had occurred to one of his friends, who had been almost drowned and whom I had attempted to rescue.

Although I was unable to reach the man until he had already been rescued, I received the hearty thanks of the two Englishmen, and the following day I called upon them.

The friend was a man about thirty years old. He bore an enormous head on a child's body—a body without chest or shoulders. An immense forehead, which seemed to have engulfed the rest of the man, expanded like a dome above a thin face which ended in a little pointed beard. Two sharp eyes and a peculiar mouth gave one the impression of the head of a reptile, while the magnificent brow suggested a genius.

A nervous twitching shook this peculiar being, who walked, moved, acted by jerks, like a broken spring.

This was Algernon Charles Swinburne, son of an English admiral, and grandson, on the maternal side, of the Earl of Ashburnham.

His strange countenance was transfigured when he spoke. I have seldom seen a man more impressive, more eloquent, incisive, or charming in conversation. His rapid, clear, piercing, and fantastic imagination seemed to creep into his voice and to lend life to his words. His brusque gestures enlivened his speech, which penetrated one like a dagger; and he had bursts of thought, just as light-houses throw out flashes of fire, great, genial lights that seemed to illuminate a whole world of ideas.

The home of the two friends was pretty and by no means commonplace. Everywhere were paint-

ings, some superb, some strange, representing different conceptions of insanity. Unless I am mistaken, there was a water-color which represented the head of a dead man floating in a rose-colored shell on a boundless ocean, under a moon with a human face.

Here and there I came across bones. I clearly remember a flayed hand on which was hanging some dried skin and black muscles, and on the snow-white bones could be seen the traces of dried blood.

The food was a riddle which I could not solve. Was it good? Was it bad? I could not say. Some roast monkey took away all desire to make a steady diet of this animal; and the great monkey who roamed about among us at large and playfully pushed his head into my glass when I wished to drink cured me of any desire I might have to take one of his brothers as a companion for the rest of my days.

As for the two men, they gave me the impression of two strange, original, remarkable minds, belonging to that peculiar race of talented madmen from which have arisen Poe, Hoffmann, and many others.

If genius is, as is commonly believed, a sort of aberration of great intelligence, then Algernon Charles Swinburne is undoubtedly a genius.

Great minds that are healthy are never considered genial; whereas this sublime qualification is lavished on brains that are often inferior but are slightly touched by madness.

At any rate, this poet remains one of the first of his time, through his originality and polished form. He is an exalted lyrical singer who seldom bothers about the good and humble truth, which French

poets are now seeking so persistently and patiently. He strives to set down dreams, subtle thoughts, sometimes great, sometimes visibly forced, but sometimes magnificent.

Two years later I found the house closed and its tenants gone. The furniture was being sold. In memory of them I bought the hideous flayed hand. On the grass an enormous square block of granite bore this simple word: "Nop." Above this a hollow stone offered water to the birds. It was the grave of the monkey, who had been hanged by a young, vindictive negro servant. It was said that this violent domestic had been forced to flee at the point of his exasperated master's revolver. After wandering about without home or food for several days, he returned and began to peddle barley-sugar in the streets. He was expelled from the country after he had been almost strangled by a displeased customer.

The world would be gayer if one could often meet homes like that.



THE ORIENT



UTUMN is here! When I feel the first touch of winter, I have to think of my friend who lives out there on the borders of Asia.

The last time I went to see him I knew that I should not see him again. It was toward the end of September, three years ago. I found him stretched out on his divan, dreaming under the influence of opium. Holding out his hand to me without moving, he said:

“Stay here, talk, and I will answer you, but I shall not move, for you know that when once the drug has been swallowed you must stay on your back.”

I sat down and began to tell him a thousand things about Paris and the boulevard.

But he interrupted me.

“What you are saying does not interest me in the least, for I am thinking only of the countries under other skies. Oh, how that poor Gautier must have suffered, always haunted by the longing for the Orient! You don’t know what that means, how

that country takes hold of you, how it captivates you, penetrates you to your inmost being and will not let you go. It enters into you through the eye, through the skin, with all its invisible seductions, and it holds you by an invisible thread, which is unceasingly pulling you, in whatever spot on earth chance may have flung you. I take the drug in order to muse on that land in the delicious torpor of opium."

He stopped and closed his eyes.

"Does it seem so pleasant to you to take this poison?" I asked. "What physical joy does it give, to make one absorb it even to death?"

"It is not a physical joy," he replied; "it is better than that, it is more. I am often sad; I detest life, which wounds me every day on all sides, with all its hardness. Opium consoles for everything, makes one take part in all. Do you know that state of mind that I might call teasing irritation? I ordinarily live in that state. And there are two things that can cure me of it: opium or the Orient. As soon as I have taken opium I lie down and wait, perhaps one hour, and sometimes two. Then, when it begins to take effect I feel first a slight trembling in the hands and feet, not a cramp, but a vibrant numbness; then little by little I have the strange and delicious sensation of feeling my limbs disappear. It seems to me as if they were taken off, and this feeling grows upon me until it fills me completely. I have no longer any body; I retain merely a kind of pleasant memory of it. Only my head is there, and it works. I muse. I think with an infinite, material joy, with unequaled lucidity, with a surprising penetration. I reason, I deduct, I understand everything, I discover ideas that never

before have come to me; I descend to new depths and mount to marvelous heights; I am floating in an ocean of thought, and I taste the incomparable happiness, the ideal enjoyment of the chaste and serene intoxication of pure intelligence."

Again he stopped and closed his eyes. I said:

"Your longing for the Orient is due only to this constant intoxication. You are living in a state of hallucination. How can one long for that barbarous country, where the Mind is dead, where sterile thought does not go beyond the narrow limits of life, and makes no effort to take flight, to increase and conquer?"

"What does practical thought matter?" he replied; "what I love is the dream. That only is good, and that only is sweet. Implacable reality would lead me to suicide, if the dream did not allow me to wait.

"You say that the Orient is the land of barbarians; stop, you fool! it is the country of the sages, the hot country where they let life flow by, and where angles are rounded.

"We are the barbarians, we men of the West, who call ourselves civilized; we are hateful barbarians, who live a painful life, like brutes.

"Look at our cities built of stone and our furniture made of hard and knotty wood. We mount, panting, a high and narrow stairway, to go into stuffy apartments, into which the cold wind comes whistling, only to escape immediately again through a chimney, which creates deadly currents of air that are strong enough to turn a windmill. Our chairs are hard, our walls cold, and covered with ugly paper; everywhere we are wounded by angles. Angles on our tables, on our mantels, on our doors,

and on our beds. We are living on our feet or sitting in our chairs, but we never lie down except to sleep, which is ridiculous, for in sleeping you are not conscious of the happiness there is in being stretched out flat.

“And then to think of our intellectual life! It is filled with incessant struggle and strife. Worry hovers over us and preoccupations tease us; we no longer have time to seek and pursue the two or three good things within our reach.

“It is war to the finish. And our character, even more than our furniture, is full of angles—angles everywhere.

“We are hardly out of bed when we hasten to our work, in rain or snow. We are fighting rivals, competitions, hostilities. Every man is an enemy whom we must fear and overcome, and with whom we must resort to ruse. Even love has with us its aspects of victory and defeat: that also is a struggle.”

He reflected for some moments, and then continued:

“I know the house that I am going to buy. It is square, with a flat roof and wooden trimmings, in the Oriental fashion. From the terrace you can see the sea, where white sails like pointed wings are passing, and Grecian or Mohammedan ships. There are hardly any openings in the walls outside. A large garden, where the air is heavy under the shadow of palms, is in the center of this dwelling. A jet of water rises from under the trees, and falls in drops into a large marble basin, the bottom of which is covered with golden sand. I shall bathe there at any hour of the day, between two pipes, two dreams, two kisses.

“ I will not have any servant, any hideous maid with greasy apron, who kicks up the dirty bottom of her skirt with her worn shoes. Oh, that kick of the heel, which shows the yellow ankle! It fills my heart with disgust, and yet I cannot avoid it. Those wretches all do it.

“ I shall no longer hear the tramping of shoes on the floor, the loud slamming of doors, the crash of breaking dishes.

“ I will have beautiful black slaves, draped in white veils, who run barefoot over heavy carpets.

“ My walls shall be soft and resilient, like the breast of woman; and my divans, ranged in a circle around each apartment, shall be heaped with cushions of all shapes, so that I may lie down in all possible postures.

“ Then, when I am tired of this delicious repose, tired of enjoying immobility and my eternal dream, tired of the calm pleasure of well-being, I shall have a swift black or white horse brought to my door.

“ And I shall ride away on it, drinking in the air which stings and intoxicates, the air that whistles when one is galloping furiously.

“ And I shall fly like an arrow over this colored earth, which intoxicates the eye and seems savory like wine.

“ In the calm of the evening I shall ride madly toward the wide horizon, which is tinged with pink by the setting sun. Everything is pink down there in the twilight, the scorched mountains, the sand, the clothing of the Arabs, the white coat of the horses.

“ Pink flamingoes rise out of the marshes under

the pink sky; and I shall shout deliriously, bathed in the illimitable pinkness of the world.

“ I shall no longer see men dressed in black, sitting on uncomfortable chairs and drinking absinthe while talking of business, or walking along the pavements, in the midst of the deafening noise of cabs in the street.

“ I shall know nothing of the state of the Bourse, the fluctuations of stocks and bonds, all the useless stupidities in which we waste our short, miserable, and traitorous existence. Why all this trouble, all this suffering, all these struggles? I shall rest, sheltered from the wind, in my bright, sumptuous house.

“ And I shall have four or five wives in luxurious apartments—five wives who have come from the five divisions of the world and who will bring to me the taste of feminine beauty found in all races.”

Again he stopped, and then he said softly:

“ Leave me.”

I went, and I never saw him again.

Two months later he sent me these three words only: “ I am happy.”

His letter smelled of incense and other sweet perfumes.



A MILLION *



It was a modest clerk's establishment. The husband was employed in the ministry; he was correct and conscientious and fulfilled his duties to the letter. His name was Léopold Bonnin. He was young and slight, and his thoughts never strayed from the proper way. Reared religiously, he had been somewhat shaken in his faith, as the Republic was tending to favor the separation of Church and State. He was wont to say, with loud voice, in his office: "I am religious, but religious before God; I am not a clerical." He declared himself, first of all, a good man, and he said so while tapping his chest. He was, indeed, good in the strictest sense of the word. He came punctually and left on time; he did not loiter along the way, and was always very exact in the questions of money. He had married the daughter of a poor

* This story appeared in *Gil Blas* Nov. 2, 1882, under the signature of "Maufrigneuse," and was later developed into the longer story, *The Inheritance*.

colleague, whose sister was worth a million, having been married for love. To her great grief she never had any children, and so could not leave her property to any one but her niece.

This inheritance was the one thought of the family. It hovered over the house and over the ministry, for every one there said "The Bonnins will inherit a million."

The young couple also did not have any children, but that did not trouble them; and they continued to live their quiet, sedate, honorable life. Their apartment was neat, well furnished, and quiet, for they were calm and moderate in everything; and they thought that a child would only disturb their mode of life, their household, and their rest.

They would not have taken any steps to remain without issue, but if Heaven did not send them any, so much the better.

The millionaire aunt was grief-stricken on account of their sterility, and gave them good advice to overcome it. She herself had formerly tried a thousand remedies, divulged to her by friends or by clairvoyants; but to no purpose. When she had passed the child-bearing age she still was told of a thousand other things which she considered infallible, and she was unhappy that she could no longer try them; but she hastened to impart them to her niece and nephew, saying incessantly to them: "Well, have you tried what I told you the other day?"

One day she died. The young couple felt that kind of secret joy behind their mourning, which people veil even to themselves and to others. The conscience drapes itself in black, while the soul dances with gladness.

They received notice that a testament had been deposited with a lawyer, and they hastened to him on leaving the church after the funeral service.

The aunt, faithful to the fixed idea that had dominated her life, left her million to their first-born child, giving the income to the parents for life. If the couple should have no heirs within three years, the fortune should go to the poor.

The couple were astonished, dumfounded. The husband became ill and stayed away from the office for a week. Then, when he was well again, he emphatically made up his mind that he would become a father.

For six months he did his utmost, so that he dwindled down to a shadow of himself. He now recalled all the remedies which the aunt had vaunted to them, and conscientiously put them into practice, but it was of no avail. His desperate desire gave him a factitious strength that nearly proved fatal to him.

He grew weak with anæmia, and they were afraid that he would sink into consumption. The doctor frightened him with his diagnosis, and made him return to his former peaceful ways, more peaceful even than formerly, prescribing a strengthening regimen.

His colleagues in the office found it a very amusing affair. They knew the disillusion occasioned by the testament, and this famous affair of the million became the joke of the departments. Some of the clerks laughingly gave Bonnin good advice; others went so far as to offer their services, in order that the dreadful clause of the testament might be fulfilled. One big fellow especially, who had the reputation of being a high liver, and whose lady-killing

exploits were the talk of the offices, kept teasing him with allusions and ambiguous hints, boasting that he could get the heritage for Bonnin within twenty minutes.

One day Léopold Bonnin grew angry, and rising suddenly, with his pen behind his ear, he sputtered forth this insult: "Monsieur, you are an infamous person. If I did not respect myself I would spit in your face."

Both parties sent seconds to each other, throwing the ministry into a turmoil for three days. The seconds kept running out into the halls, exchanging their opinions on the affair. A compromise was finally arrived at by the four delegates unanimously and accepted by the two belligerents, who gravely bowed and shook hands before the chief of the bureau, stammering some words of apology.

During the following month the two bowed to each other with formal and well-bred politeness, like adversaries who have stood face to face. Then one day, as they bumped into each other on turning a corner, M. Bonnin said with dignified eagerness: "I have not hurt you, Monsieur?" and the other replied: "Not at all, Monsieur."

From that moment they thought it fitting to exchange a few words on meeting. Little by little they grew more friendly; they grew to know each other's peculiarities, and understood and respected each other, like men who had not really known each other before, and then they became inseparable.

But Léopold was unhappy in his home. His wife kept teasing him with irritating allusions, and nagged him in ambiguous terms. So the time passed. One year had already slipped by since the aunt's death, and the inheritance seemed to be lost.

Madame Bonnin was wont to say, on sitting down at table: "We have not much for dinner; it would be different if we were rich."

When Léopold went out to his office his wife said, on handing him his cane: "If we had an income of fifty thousand francs you would not need to tire yourself out there, Monsieur Scratch-pen."

When Madame Bonnin was going out in rainy weather, she muttered: "If I had a carriage I should not need to get muddy in weather like this."

In short, in season and out she seemed to reproach her husband with something shameful, looking upon him only as the guilty one, and making him only responsible for the loss of this fortune.

Exasperated, he finally took her to a great physician, who, after a long consultation, expressed no definite opinion, saying that he saw nothing really amiss; things like this happened frequently; it was with bodies as with minds; having seen so many marriages torn asunder by incompatibility of temper, it was not astonishing to see others sterile by reason of physical incompatibility. This opinion cost forty francs.

Another year passed. War was declared between husband and wife, an incessant, bitter war; there was between them a kind of dreadful hatred. And Madame Bonnin unceasingly repeated: "How unfortunate, to lose a fortune because one has married a fool!" Or again: "To think that if I had chanced upon another man I should now have an income of fifty thousand francs!" Or: "There are people who are always in the way in the world. They spoil everything."

The dinners, and the evening especially, became intolerable. Léopold, who was at his wits' ends,

dreading horrible scenes, one evening brought home his friend Frédéric Morel, the man with whom he had almost fought a duel. Morel soon became the friend of the family and one to whose counsels the couple listened.

Only six months now remained before the expiration of the term that would give a million to the poor couple. And now Léopold turned about and became the aggressor, indulging in obscure insinuations, and hinting mysteriously of clerks' wives who had helped their husbands to a career.

Now and again he would tell of a surprising advancement that had been granted to a clerk. "Little Ravinot, who had a back seat five years ago, has just been appointed assistant chief."

Madame Bonnin replied: "You are not one who could have done that."

"And he has done more than that," said Léopold, shrugging. "He has a clever wife, that's all! She knew how to please the chief of division, and now she can have what she wants. One must know how to arrange matters in life, so as not to be the fool of circumstances."

Just what did he mean? And what did she understand? What happened? Both of them had a calendar in which they marked the days separating them from the fateful term; and with every new week they grew more maddened and enraged, and so exasperated with a hopeless despair, that they would have committed a crime if that had been the condition.

Then one fine morning Madame Bonnin, with shining eyes and radiant face, laid her hands on her husband's shoulders, and, fixing her eyes on his with a joyous gaze that seemed to penetrate

his very soul, she said softly: "I think that I am *enceinte!*"

The shock of this news was so great to him that he almost fell over; then he seized his wife by the waist, kissed her madly, set her on his knee, pressed her close like an adored child, and wept and sobbed, overcome with emotion.

Two months later there was no longer any doubt. Then he took her to a physician to get a certificate of her condition, which he took to the lawyer who had charge of the testament.

The man of law declared that from the moment that the infant existed, born or yet to be born, he gave in, and would defer the probating of the will until the time of birth.

A boy was born to the couple, whom they named Dieudonné, in memory of the practice obtaining in royal houses.

They became rich.

One evening, as Monsieur Bonnin came home, and Frédéric Morel was to dine with them, his wife said to him simply: "I have asked our friend Frédéric not to set foot in this house again; he has misbehaved toward me."

Léopold looked at her for a second with a grateful smile in his eye, then he opened his arms and she flung herself into them. They kissed each other for a long, a very long time, like a good little couple that is very loving, very closely united, and very honorable.

And you should hear Madame Bonnin talk of the women who have fallen through love, or of those whom a great passion has driven into adultery!



A HUMBLE DRAMA



MEETINGS that are unexpected constitute the charm of traveling. Who has not experienced the joy of suddenly coming across a Parisian, a college friend, or a neighbor, five hundred miles from home? Who has not passed a night awake in one of those small, rattling country stagecoaches, in regions where steam is still a thing unknown, beside a strange young woman, of whom one has caught only a glimpse in the dim light of the lantern, as she entered the carriage in front of a white house in some small country town?

And the next morning, when one's head and ears feel numb with the continuous tinkling of the bells and the loud rattling of the windows, what a charming sensation it is to see your pretty neighbor open her eyes, startled, glance around, arrange her rebellious hair with her slender fingers, adjust her hat, feel with sure hand whether her corset is still

in place, her waist straight, and her skirt not too wrinkled!

She glances at you coldly and curiously. Then she leans back and no longer seems to pay any attention to the country.

In spite of yourself, you watch her; and in spite of yourself you are always thinking of her. Who is she? Whence does she come? Where is she going? In spite of yourself you spin a little romance around her. She is pretty; she seems charming! Happy he who—— Life might be delightful with her. Who knows? She is perhaps the woman of our dreams, the one suited to our disposition, the one for whom our heart calls.

And how delicious even the sadness of seeing her get out at the gate of a country house! A man stands there, who is awaiting her, with two children and two maids. He takes her in his arms and kisses her in handing her out. Then she stoops over the little ones, who hold up their hands to her; she kisses them tenderly; and then they all go away together, down a path, while the maids catch the packages which the driver throws down to them from the coach.

Adieu! It is all over. You never will see her again! Adieu to the young woman who has passed the night by your side. You know her no more, you have not spoken to her; all the same, you feel a little sad to see her go. Adieu!

I have had many of these souvenirs of travel, some joyous and some sad.

Once I was in Auvergne, tramping through those delightful French mountains, that are not too high, not too hard, and are intimate and familiar. I had climbed the Sancy, and entered a little inn, near a

pilgrim's chapel called Notre-Dame de Vassivière; and as I was breakfasting alone at the center table I saw an old, queer, and ridiculous-looking woman.

She was at least seventy years old, tall, skinny, and angular, and her white hair was puffed around her temples in the old-fashioned style. She was dressed like a traveling Englishwoman, in awkward, queer clothing, like a person who is indifferent to dress. She was eating an omelet and drinking water.

Her face was peculiar, with restless eyes and the expression of one with whom fate has dealt unkindly. I watched her, in spite of myself, thinking: "Who is she? What is the life of this woman? Why is she roaming alone through these mountains?"

She paid and rose to leave, drawing up over her shoulders an astonishing little shawl, the two ends of which hung over her arms. From a corner of the room she took a long walking-stick, which was covered with names traced with a hot iron; then she went out, straight, erect, with the long steps of a letter-carrier who is setting out on his route.

A guide was waiting for her at the door, and both went away. I watched them go down the valley, along the road marked by a line of high wooden crosses. She was taller than her companion, and seemed to walk faster than he.

Two hours later I was climbing the edge of the deep funnel inclosing Lake Pavin in a marvelous and enormous basin of verdure, full of trees, bushes, rocks, and flowers. This lake is so round that it seems as if the outline had been drawn with a circle, so clear and blue that one might deem it a flood of azure come down from the sky, so charming that

one would like to live in a hut on the wooded slope which dominates this crater, where the cold, still water is sleeping.

The Englishwoman was standing there like a statue, gazing upon the transparent sheet down in the dead volcano. She was straining her eyes to penetrate below the surface down to the unknown depths, where monstrous trout are said to live, which have devoured all the other fish. As I was passing close by her, it seemed to me that two big tears were brimming her eyes. But she departed at a great pace, to rejoin her guidé, who had stayed behind in a cabaret at the foot of the path leading to the lake.

I did not see her again that day.

The next day, at nightfall, I came to the château of Murol. The old fortress, an enormous tower standing on a peak in the midst of a large valley, where three valleys intersect, rears its brown, uneven, cracked surface into the sky; it is round, from its large circular base to the crumbling turrets on its pinnacles.

It catches the eye more than any other ruin by its simple mass, its majesty, its grave and imposing air of antiquity. It is standing there, alone, high like a mountain, a dead queen, but still the queen of the valleys stretched out beneath it. You go up by a slope planted with fire, then you enter a narrow gate, and stop at the foot of the walls, in the first inclosure, in full view of the entire country.

Inside there are ruined halls, crumbling stairs, unknown cavities, dungeons, walls cut through in the middle, disconnected vaults, and a mass of stones and crevices, overgrown with grass, where animals glide in and out.

I was exploring this ruin alone.

Suddenly I perceived behind a bit of wall a being, a kind of phantom, like the spirit of this ancient and crumbling habitation.

I was taken aback with surprise, almost with fear, when I recognized the old woman whom I had seen twice.

She was weeping, with big tears in her eyes, and held her handkerchief in her hand.

I turned around to go away, when she spoke to me, apparently ashamed to have been surprised in her grief.

“Yes, Monsieur, I am crying. That does not happen often to me.”

“Pardon me, Madame, for having disturbed you,” I stammered, confused, not knowing what to say. “Some misfortune has doubtless come to you.”

“Yes. No—I am like a lost dog,” she murmured, and began to sob, with her handkerchief over her eyes.

Moved by these contagious tears, I took her hand, trying to calm her.

Then brusquely she told me her history, as if no longer able to bear her grief alone.

“Oh! Oh! Monsieur . . . if you knew . . . the sorrow in which I live . . . in what sorrow. . . .

“Once I was happy. . . . I have a house down there . . . a home. I cannot go back to it any more; I shall never go back to it again, it is too hard to bear.

“I have a son. It is he! it is he! Children don’t know. Oh, one has so little time to live! If I should see him now I should perhaps not recog-

nize him. How I loved him! How I loved him! Even before he was born, when I felt him move. And after that! How I have kissed and caressed and cherished him! If you knew how many nights I have passed in watching him sleep, and how many in thinking of him. I was crazy over him. When he was eight years old his father put him into boarding-school. That was the end. He no longer belonged to me. Oh, heavens! He came to see me every Sunday. That was all!

“He went to college in Paris. Then he came only four times a year, and every time I was astonished to see how he had changed, to find him taller without having seen him grow. They stole his childhood from me, his confidence, and his love which otherwise would not have gone away from me; they stole my joy to see him grow, to become a little man.

“I saw him four times a year. Think of it! And at every one of his visits his body, his eye, his movements, his voice, his laughter, were no longer the same, were no longer mine. All these things change so quickly in a child; and it is so sad if one is not there to see them change; one no longer recognizes him.

“One year he came with down on his cheek! He! my son! I was dumfounded—would you believe it? I hardly dared to kiss him. Was it really he, my little, little curly head of old, my dear, dear child, whom I had held in his diapers on my knee, and who had sucked my milk with his plump cheeks—was it he, this tall, brown boy, who no longer knew how to kiss me, who seemed to love me as a matter of duty, who called me ‘Mother’ for the sake of politeness, and who kissed me on the forehead, when I felt like crushing him in my arms?

“ My husband died. Then my parents, and then my two sisters. When death enters a house it seems as if he were hurrying to do his utmost, so as not to have to return for a long time after that. He spares only one or two to mourn the others.

“ I remained alone. My tall son was then studying law. I was hoping to live and die near him, and I went to him, so that we could live together. But he had fallen into the ways of young men, and he gave me to understand that I was in his way. So I left. I was wrong in doing so, but I suffered too much in feeling myself in his way, I, his mother! And I came back home.

“ I hardly ever saw him again.

“ He married. What a joy! At last we should be together for good. I should have grandchildren. His wife was an Englishwoman, who took a dislike to me. Why? Perhaps she felt that I loved him too much.

“ Again I was obliged to go away. And I was alone. Yes, Monsieur.

“ Then he went to England, to live with them, with his wife's parents. Do you understand that? They have him—they have my son for themselves. They have stolen him from me. He writes to me once a month. At first he came to see me. But now he no longer comes.

“ It is now four years since I saw him last. His face then was wrinkled and his hair white. Was that possible? This man, my son, almost an old man? My little rosy child of old? I don't doubt that I shall not see him again.

“ And so I travel about all the year. I go east and west, as you see, with no companion.

“ I am like a lost dog. Adieu, Monsieur! don't

stay here with me, for it hurts me to have told you all this."

I went down the hill, and on turning around to glance back, I saw the old woman standing on a cracked wall, looking out upon the mountains, the long valley and Lake Chambon in the distance.

And her skirt and the queer little shawl which she wore around her thin shoulders were fluttering like a flag in the wind.



NOTES OF A TRAVELER



SEVEN o'clock. A sharp whistle, and off we go. The train passes over the revolving disk with the noise of stage thunder, then it is lost in the night, panting, puffing up its vapor, throwing gleams of red light on passing walls, hedges, woods, and fields.

We are six, three on each seat, under the light of the lamp. Opposite me is a stout lady with a stout gentleman, an old married couple. A hunchback sits in the left corner; beside me is a young married pair, or, at least, a young couple. Are they married? The young woman is pretty and seems modest, but she smells too strongly of per-

fume. What kind of perfume is it? I know it without being able to name it. Ah! now I've got it. *Peau d'Espagne*? That tells nothing. Let us wait and see.

The stout lady looks at the young woman with an air of hostility which sets me to thinking. The stout gentleman closes his eyes. Already! The hunchback has rolled himself up into a ball. I no longer see where his legs are. One sees nothing but his bright eye under a Greek cap with a red button. Then he shrinks into his traveling-shawl. One might say that there was a little parcel thrown down on the seat.

The old lady alone stays awake, suspicious, uneasy, like a watchman whose duty it is to guard the order and morality of the occupants of the carriage.

The young people do not move; their knees are under the same shawl, and their eyes are open, but they do not speak; are they married?

I also pretend to sleep, and watch.

Nine o'clock. The stout lady is about to give in, she closes her eyes spasmodically, and her head drops on her breast, but she lifts it up again by fits and starts. Then at last she goes to sleep.

O sleep! ridiculous mystery which makes faces appear so grotesque, you are the revealer of human ugliness. You uncover all shortcomings, all deformities, and all defects. You turn every face touched by you into a caricature.

I rise and put the light-blue covering over the lamp, and then I also go to sleep.

Now and again I am awakened when the train stops. An employee calls out the name of a town, and then we go on.

Here is the dawn. We run alongside the Rhône,

which is going down to the Mediterranean. Everybody is sleeping. The young people have their arms around each other. One of the feet of the young woman is peeping from under the shawl. She is wearing white stockings! That is ordinary: they are married! The air is not fresh in the compartment, and I open a window to change it. The cold coming in awakens every one, except the hunchback, who is snoring under his cover.

The ugliness of the faces becomes more accentuated in the light of the new day.

The stout lady, with red face and untidy hair, looking like a fright, glances sidewise maliciously at her neighbors. The young woman looks smilingly at her companion. If she were not married she would have first looked into her mirror.

Here we are at Marseilles. Twenty minutes' stop. I breakfast. We go on. We are less the hunchback, and have instead two old gentlemen.

Then the two married couples unpack their provisions. A chicken here, cold veal there, pepper and salt in paper, pickles in a handkerchief—everything to make you disgusted with food forever. I know nothing that is more common, more vulgar, more out of place, and more ill-bred than to eat in a carriage where there are other passengers.

If it is freezing, open the windows. If it is hot, close them and smoke your pipe, even if you detest tobacco; begin to sing, to bark, indulge in the most inconveniencing eccentricities, take off your shoes and stockings and pare your toe-nails; in short, pay these ill-bred people in their own coin for their lack of knowledge of what is becoming.

The far-sighted man will carry a flask of benzine or of kerosene oil to sprinkle on the cushions

when the people beside him begin to eat their luncheon. Everything is permitted, anything is too good for the boors who poison you with the odor of their food.

Now we are running beside the blue sea. The sun beats down upon the coast dotted with charming towns.

Here is Saint-Raphael. Yonder is Saint-Tropez, the small capital of that deserted, unknown, and ravishing country called the Mountains of the Moors. A broad river not spanned by any bridge, the Argens, separates this wild peninsula from the continent, and one can walk there for a whole day without meeting any one. Here the villages, perched upon the mountains, are the same as they were in former times, with their Oriental houses, their arcades, their low-vaulted doors ornamented with sculpture.

No railroad and no public conveyance penetrate into these splendid wooded valleys. Only an old mail-boat carries the mail from Hyères and Saint-Tropez.

We fly past. Here is Cannes, so pretty on the shore of its two gulfs, opposite the islands of Lérins, which would be two Edens for the sick, if they could be connected with the mainland.

Here is the Gulf of Juan; the armored squadron seems to lie asleep on the water.

Here is Nice. There is apparently an exposition in this city. Let us go to see it.

Following a boulevard, which seems like a marsh, we reach a building on an elevation, in doubtful taste, which seems a miniature replica of the great palace of the Trocadéro.

Inside there are some promenaders in the midst

of a chaos of boxes. The Exposition, which has officially been open for a long time, will doubtless be ready next year!

It would be attractive inside if it were ready. But it is far from that.

Two sections especially attracted me: that of the comestibles and that of the Fine Arts. Alas! there really are preserved fruits of Grasse here, and a thousand other good things to eat. But—it is forbidden to sell them! One may only look at them! And that so as not to injure the trade of the town! To expose sweetmeats for the mere pleasure of looking at them, and with an interdiction against tasting them, really seems to be one of the finest inventions of the human mind.

The Fine Arts are—in preparation! Yet some halls are open, where one may see very fine landscapes by Harpignies, Guillemet, Le Poittevin, a superb portrait of Mademoiselle Alice Regnault by Courtois, a delightful Béraud, etc. As for the rest —after unpacking!

As one must see everything on visiting à place, I will treat myself to an air trip in the balloon of MM. Godard and Company.

The mistral is blowing. The balloon is balancing itself in an uneasy way. Suddenly there is a detonation; it is the cords of the net which break. The public is forbidden to come within the inclosure, and I also am turned out.

I climb upon my carriage and survey the scene.

Every moment some new attachment crashes with a singular noise, and the brown skin of the balloon attempts to rise from the meshes that hold it. Then suddenly, with a more violent explosion, there is an immense tear from top to bottom of the

great ball, which falls together like a limp cloth, pierced and dead.

The next morning on awakening I called for the newspapers and was astonished to read: "The tempest now raging on our coast has obliged the administration of the captive and free balloons of Nice to empty its great acrostat, in order to avoid accidents. The system of instantaneous emptying used by M. Godard is one of his inventions that redound most to his honor."

Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh, dear public!

The entire coast of the Mediterranean is the California of the pharmacists. One must be ten times a millionaire to dare purchase even a simple box of medicinal paste from these haughty merchants, who ask the price of diamonds for jujube.

One may go from Nice to Monaco by the Corniche, following the sea. There is nothing more charming than this road cut into the rock, which skirts gulfs, passes under arches, and turns and twists along the mountain through an admirable country.

Here is Monaco on its rock, and behind it Monte Carlo. Hush! I can understand how those who like to gamble adore this pretty little town. But how somber and sad it is for those who do not gamble! There is no other pleasure, no other attraction.

Farther on is Mentone, the hottest place on the coast, and the one most frequented by invalids. There the oranges ripen and consumptives are cured.

I take the night train to return to Cannes. In my compartment there are two ladies and a man from Marseilles, who is determined to tell stories of railway accidents, murders, and thefts.

“ I once knew a Corsican, Madame, who came to Paris with his son. I speak of a far-off time, for this was in the early days of the P. L. M. route. I joined them, since we are friends, and off we went.

“ The son, who was twenty years old, was looking out of the window to see the train behind. His father kept repeating to him: ‘ Hé! Take care, Mathéo! Don’t lean out too far, or you may hurt yourself.’ But the boy did not even answer.

“ I said to the father:

“ ‘ Let him do it, if it amuses him.’

“ But the father repeated:

“ ‘ Come now, Mathéo, don’t lean out like that.’

“ Then, as the son did not answer, he took him by the coat to make him sit back in the car, and pulled him. And then a corpse fell on our knees. He was minus his head, Madame, for it had been cut off by a tunnel. And the neck did not even bleed any longer; it all had fallen along the way.”

One of the ladies heaved a sigh, closed her eyes, and sank upon her neighbor. She had fainted.



THE GRAVE *



HE seventeenth of July, one thousand eight hundred and eighty-three, at half-past two in the morning, the watchman in the cemetery of Bésiers, who lived in a small cottage on the edge of this field of the dead, was awakened by the barking of his dog, which was shut up in the kitchen.

Going down quickly, he saw the animal nosing around the crack of the door and barking furiously, as if some tramp had been sneaking about the house. The keeper, Vincent, therefore, took his gun and went out.

His dog, preceding him, at once ran in the direction of the Avenue Général Bonnet, stopping short at the monument of Madame Tomoiseau.

* *The Grave* appeared in *Gil Blas*, July 29, 1883, under the signature of "Maufrigneuse."

The keeper, advancing cautiously, soon saw a faint light on the side of the Avenue Malenvers, and stealing in among the graves, he came upon a horrible act of profanation.

A man had dug up the coffin of a young woman who had been buried the evening before, and was dragging the corpse out of it.

A small dark-lantern, standing on a pile of earth, lighted up this hideous scene.

Vincent sprang upon the wretch, threw him to the ground, bound his hands, and took him to the police station.

It was a young, wealthy, and respected lawyer in town, named Courbataille.

He was brought into court. The Public Prosecutor opened the case by referring to the monstrous deeds of the Sergeant Bertrand.

A wave of indignation swept over the courtroom. When the magistrate sat down the crowd assembled cried: "Death! death!" With difficulty the presiding judge established silence.

Then he said gravely:

"Defendant, what have you to say in your defence?"

Courbataille, who had refused counsel, rose. He was a handsome fellow, tall, brown, with a frank face, energetic manner, and a fearless eye.

Paying no attention to the whistlings in the room, he began to speak, in a voice that was low and veiled at first, but that grew more firm as he proceeded.

"Monsieur le Président, gentlemen of the jury: I have very little to say. The woman whose grave I violated was my mistress. I loved her.

"I loved her, not with a sensual love, and not

with mere tenderness of heart and soul, but with an absolute, complete love, with an overpowering passion.

“Hear me:

“When I met her for the first time I felt a strange sensation. It was not astonishment nor admiration, nor yet that which is called love at first sight, but a feeling of delicious well-being, as if I had been plunged into a warm bath. Her gestures seduced me, her voice enchanted me, and it was with infinite pleasure that I looked upon her person. It seemed to me as if I had seen her before, and as if I had known her a long time. She had within her something of my spirit.

“She seemed to me like an answer to a cry uttered by my soul, to that vague and unceasing cry with which we call upon Hope during our whole life.

“When I knew her a little better, the mere thought of seeing her again filled me with exquisite and profound uneasiness; the touch of her hand in mine was more delightful to me than anything that I had imagined; her smile filled me with a mad joy, with the desire to run, to dance, to fling myself upon the ground.

“So she became my mistress.

“She was more than that: she was my very life. I looked for nothing further on earth, and had no further desires. I longed for nothing further.

“One evening, when we had gone on a somewhat long walk by the river, we were overtaken by the rain, and she caught cold. It developed into pneumonia the next day, and a week later she was dead.

“During the hours of her suffering astonishment and consternation prevented my understanding

and reflecting upon it, but when she was dead I was so overwhelmed by blank despair that I had no thoughts left. I wept.

“ During all the horrible details of the interment, my keen and wild grief was yet like a madness, a kind of sensual, physical grief.

“ Then when she was gone, when she was under the earth, my mind at once found itself again, and I passed through a series of moral sufferings so terrible that even the love she had vouchsafed to me was dear at that price.

“ Then the fixed idea came to me: I shall not see her again.

“ When one dwells on this thought for a whole day one feels as if he were going mad. Just think of it! There is a woman whom you adore, a unique woman, for in the whole universe there is not a second one like her. This woman has given herself to you, and has created with you the mysterious union that is called Love. Her eye seems to you more vast than space, more charming than the world, that clear eye smiling with her tenderness. This woman loves you. When she speaks to you her voice floods you with joy.

“ And suddenly she disappears! Think of it! She disappears, not only for you, but forever. She is dead. Do you understand what that means? Never, never, never, not anywhere, will she exist any more. Nevermore will that eye look upon anything again; nevermore will that voice, nor voice like it, utter a word in the same way that she uttered it.

“ Nevermore will a face be born that is like hers. Never, never! The molds of statues are kept; casts are kept, by which one can make objects with the same outlines and forms. But that one body and

that one face will never more be born again upon the earth. And yet millions and millions of creatures will be born, and more than that, and this one woman will not reappear among all the women of the future. Is it possible? It drives one mad to think of it.

“ She lived for twenty years, not more, and she has disappeared forever, forever, forever! She thought, she smiled, she loved me. And now, nothing! The flies that die in the autumn are as much as we in this world. And now, nothing! And I thought that her body, her fresh body, so warm, so sweet, so white, so lovely, would rot down there in that box under the earth. And her soul, her thought, her love—where?

“ Not to see her again! The idea of this decomposing body, that I might yet recognize, haunted me. I wanted to look at it once more.

“ I went out with a spade, a lantern, and a hammer. I jumped over the cemetery wall and I found the grave, which had not yet been closed entirely; I uncovered the coffin and took up a board. An abominable odor, the stench of putrefaction, greeted my nostrils. Oh, her bed perfumed with orris!

“ Yet I opened the coffin, and, holding my lighted lantern down into it, I saw her. Her face was blue, swollen, frightful. A black liquid had oozed out of her mouth.

“ She! That was she! Horror seized me. But I stretched out my arm to draw this monstrous face toward me. And then I was caught.

“ All night I have retained the foul odor of this putrid body, the odor of my well beloved, as one retains the perfume of a woman after a love embrace.

“ Do with me what you will.”

A strange silence seemed to oppress the room. They seemed to be waiting for something more. The jury retired to deliberate.

When they came back a few minutes later the accused showed no fear and did not even seem to think.

The president announced with the usual formalities that his judges declared him to be not guilty.

He did not move, and those present applauded.



FEAR



HE train was racing at full steam through the darkness.

I was sitting alone, opposite an old gentleman who was looking out of the door. There was a strong odor of phenol in this carriage of the P. L. M. which had doubtless come from Marseilles.

It was a suffocating night, without any moon or any breeze. No stars were visible, and the breath puffed out by the train felt hot and damp to the face, like something overpowering and choking.

Having left Paris three hours before, we were going toward the middle of France, without seeing anything of the country we were traversing.

Suddenly we saw a fantastic apparition: two men in a wood standing by a fire.

The vision lasted only for a second. They seemed to us two miserable, ragged fellows, red in the brilliant light of the fire, with their bearded faces turned toward me, and like a stage setting around them, the trees, shining green, with the bright reflection of the flame playing on their trunks, and the foliage pierced, penetrated, and steeped in the light.

Then everything again became black.

This was certainly a very strange vision. What were those two vagabonds doing in that forest? And why that fire in this stifling night?

My neighbor drew out his watch and said:

“It is exactly midnight, Monsieur; we have just seen a very curious thing.”

I agreed with him, and we began to talk, and to wonder what these men might be; criminals who were burning the proofs of their deed, or sorcerers who were preparing a potion? People do not light such a fire at midnight, in the midst of summer, in a forest, in order to make soup. What were they doing, then? We could not imagine anything probable.

And my neighbor began to chat. He was an old man, whose profession I could not guess. An original, certainly, very well informed, but whose brain was perhaps a little affected.

But do we know who are sages and who are fools, in this life, where reason should sometimes be called foolishness, and folly should be called genius?

“I am glad to have seen this,” he said. “For a few moments I have experienced a sensation that has now gone. How troublous the earth must have been formerly, when it was so mysterious.

“ In proportion as the veil of the unknown is lifted the imagination of men is unpeopled. You, Monsieur, do not think that the night is empty and of a commonplace blackness, since it no longer holds any apparitions.

“ People say: ‘ There is no longer anything fantastic, any beliefs in strange things; all that was unexplained is explicable. The supernatural is reduced, like a lake that is being drained by a canal; science narrows the limits of the marvelous from day to day.’

“ Very well, Monsieur, I belong to the older race, which likes to believe. I belong to the simple, older race, which is not accustomed to understand, to search out, to know; the race made to believe in surrounding mysteries, which refuses the simple and clear-cut truth.

“ Yes, Monsieur, they unpeopled the imagination in suppressing the invisible. Our earth appears to me always like an abandoned, empty, and naked world. The beliefs that once made it poetic are gone.

“ When I go out at night, how I should like to shiver with that fear which makes old women cross themselves as they pass the walls of cemeteries, and makes the superstitious flee from the strange exhalations of the marshes and the fantastic will-o’-the-wisps! How I should like to believe in this something vague and terrific that one imagines to be passing through the shadows!

“ How the obscurity of the evenings of old must have been somber and terrible, when it was full of unknown, fabulous beings, wicked creatures whose shapes one could not divine, but in imagining whose forms the heart turned cold; whose hidden powers

passed the limits of our thought, and whose stroke was inevitable!

“ With the disappearance of the supernatural, true fear has also disappeared from the earth, for in reality one is afraid only of that which one does not understand. Visible dangers may move, trouble, and frighten. But what is that compared with the convulsion of soul occasioned by the thought that one is about to meet a roaming specter, that one will feel the embrace of a corpse, that one of these frightful beasts invented by the fear of man will come upon one? Darkness seems to me clear since it is no longer haunted.

“ And the proof of all this is that if we should find ourselves suddenly alone in these woods, we should be pursued by the image of those two singular beings who have just appeared to us by the gleam of their fire much more than by the apprehension of any real danger.

“ One really fears only that which he does not understand,” he repeated.

And suddenly something came into my mind, and I remembered a story that Turgénieff told one Sunday at the house of Gustave Flaubert.

Has he written it anywhere? I don't know.

No one ever understood better than that great Russian romancer how to awaken in the soul that shiver at the veiled unknown, revealing in the semi-obscurity of a strange tale a whole world of disquieting, uncertain, menacing things.

In reading him one feels this vague fear of the invisible, of the unknown behind the wall, behind the door, behind the life of phenomena. We are rudely confronted with doubtful lights, which illumine our thought only enough to increase our fear.

Sometimes he seems to show to us the significance of strange coincidences, of the unexpected interlacement of apparently fortuitous circumstances, but which seem the work of a hidden and cunning will. He makes us feel an imperceptible thread, which guides us in a mysterious fashion through life, as through a hazy dream, the meaning of which is ever escaping us.

He does not penetrate boldly into the supernatural, as does Edgar Poe or Hoffmann; but he tells simple stories that are tinged with something vague and disturbing.

He also said to us that day: "One is afraid only of that which he does not understand."

He was sitting, or, rather, reclining, in a large easy-chair, with his hands hanging and his legs lazily outstretched; his white head, covered with that mass of silvery hair and beard, made him look like a Father Eternal or like one of the river-gods of Ovid.

He spoke slowly, with a certain laziness, which lent a charm to his words, and with a certain heaviness and hesitancy of speech, which emphasized the justness of his words. His pale, wide-open eyes reflected all the emotions of his mind, like the eye of a child.

He told us the following story:

He was once hunting, as a young man, in a forest in Russia. After walking all day toward the end of the afternoon he arrived at the bank of a calm river.

It flowed among the trees, was full of floating grasses, and was deep, cold, and clear.

An irresistible desire seized the traveler to fling himself into that transparent water, and he undressed and jumped into the stream. He was a

large and strong young fellow, a vigorous and daring swimmer.

He floated along lazily, with tranquil soul, the grasses and reeds touching him, and he was glad to feel the light contact of the water reeds against his skin.

Suddenly a hand was laid on his shoulder.

Turning around, startled, he beheld a frightful being looking greedily at him. It was like a woman or a she-monkey. She was laughing at him with an enormous, wrinkled, grimacing face. Two unnamable things—her breasts, no doubt—floated before her, and a shock of tangled hair, reddened by the sun, hung around her face and fell down her back.

Turgénieff was seized with the hideous, icy fear of supernatural things.

Without pausing, without reflecting, without understanding, he strained every muscle to get to the shore. But the monster swam still faster, touching his neck, his back, his legs, with little chuckles of laughter. The young man, crazed with fear, finally reached the bank, and began to run with all his legs through the woods, without even thinking of gathering up his clothes or his gun.

At the end of his strength, and paralyzed with fear, he was about to drop, when a boy guarding some goats came up with a whip, and began to beat the frightful human beast, who ran off with cries of pain. Turgénieff saw her disappear behind the trees, like a female gorilla.

It was a madwoman, who had been living for more than thirty years in those woods, on the charity of the shepherds, and who passed half her days in swimming in the river.

“I never have been so frightened in my life,”

the great Russian concluded, "because I did not understand what sort of monster this might be."

My companion, to whom I related this adventure, replied:

"Yes, one is afraid only of that which he does not understand. One really feels that dreadful convulsion of the soul which is called fright only when fear is somewhat mingled with the superstitious terror of bygone centuries. I myself have felt this fright in all its horror and because of a thing so simple and foolish that I hardly dare speak of it.

"I was traveling in Brittany, all alone and on foot. I had gone through Finistère, that desolate land, that naked land where nothing grows but prickly broom, among the large sacred stones—stones that are haunted. On the day before I had visited the sinister point of Raz, that final point of the Old World, where two oceans are eternally at war, the Atlantic and the Channel; and my head was full of legends and stories that I had read or heard in that country of romance and superstitions.

"I was walking from Penmarch to Pont-l'Abbé at night. Do you know Penmarch? It is a flat coast, which almost seems below the level of the sea. Everywhere one sees the gray and menacing sea, full of foam-covered rocks, that look like furious beasts.

"I had dined at a fisherman's inn, and I was walking along the highway, between two plains. It was very dark.

"From time to time a druidic stone seemed to look at me, like a phantom watching me pass, and little by little a vague apprehension took possession of me. Apprehension of what? I did not know. There are evenings when one feels as if touched by

spirits, when the soul shudders without reason, and the heart beats with the confused fear of something invisible, the disappearance of which I regret.

“ The route seemed to be interminably long and empty.

“ No noise could be heard but the moaning of the waves behind me, and at times that monotonous and menacing noise seemed so near that I thought they were at my heels, running over the plain with their foamy lips, so that I felt like escaping with all my speed from their pursuit.

“ The low wind, coming in gusts, was caught in a whisper by the broom around me. And, although I was walking very fast, I felt cold in my arms and legs; it was the terrible shiver of dread.

“ I would have given anything to meet some one.

“ It became so dark that at length I could hardly see my way.

“ Suddenly I heard in front of me, far off, a rumbling. A wagon, I thought. Then for a moment I heard nothing further.

“ A minute later I distinctly heard the same noise, but nearer.

“ I saw no light, but I said to myself: They have no lantern; that is astonishing in this wild country.

“ The noise stopped and then began again. It was too slight for a cart; besides, I did not hear the sound of any horse's hoof, which astonished me, since the night was still.

“ I asked myself what it could be.

“ It was approaching very fast now. I certainly heard nothing but a wheel, no sound of hoofs or of feet—nothing. What could it be?

“ It was very near now, and by an instinctive

movement of fear I flung myself into the ditch by the road, and I saw passing by me a push-cart which rolled all alone—no one was pushing it! Yes, a push-cart—all alone!

“My heart beat so violently that I sank limp into the grass, and I heard the rolling of the wheels, going toward the sea. I did not dare to get up nor to make a movement, nor to walk; for had it come back, had it pursued me, I should have died of fright.

“It took me a long time to pull myself together, and I continued with such anguish of soul that the least noise took away my breath.

“Tell me, was that not stupid? But what a fright! In thinking it over later, I understood; that cart was no doubt pushed by a barefoot boy, and I was looking for a man’s head at the ordinary height.

“Do you understand that—when one’s mind is already filled with the shudder of the supernatural—a push-cart which rolls . . . all by itself. What a frightful thing!”

He paused for a second and then resumed:

“You see, Monsieur, we are present at a curious and terrible spectacle; I mean the invasion of the cholera. You smell the phenol with which these carriages are impregnated? It is somewhere there.

“You should see Toulon at this moment. Well, one feels that it is there, It. It is not the fear of a malady that is driving these people crazy. The Cholera—that is a different matter; it is the invisible scourge of bygone times, a kind of Evil Spirit, revisiting us, which astonishes us as much as it frightens, for it seems to belong to the ages that have disappeared.

“The doctors make me laugh, with their

microbes. It is not a germ that terrifies men so that they are like to jump out of the window; but the Cholera—the inexpressible and grisly phantom that has come out of the depths of the East.

“Go through Toulon. People are dancing in the street.

“Why dance in these days of death? Fireworks are set off in the country outside of the city; the people make bonfires; bands are playing joyful music on all the public promenades.

“Why this madness?

“Because It is there and they brave It—not the Microbes, but the Cholera, and they wish to appear devilish clever before it, as before an enemy who is watching them. It is on Its account that they dance, and laugh, and cry, and light these fires, and play those waltzes—for It, the Spirit that kills, that one feels everywhere present, invisible, menacing, like one of those evil geniuses of old, for whom the priests of antiquity mumbled their incantations.”



OLD JUDAS



HIS entire stretch of country was amazing; it was characterized by a grandeur that was almost religious, and yet it had an air of sinister desolation.

A great, wild lake, filled with stagnant, black water, in which thousands of reeds were waving to and fro, lay in the midst of a vast circle of naked hills, where nothing grew but broom, or here and there an oak curiously twisted by the wind.

Just one house stood on the banks of that dark lake, a small, low house inhabited by Uncle Joseph, an old boatman, who lived on what he could make by his fishing. Once a week he carried the fish he caught into the surrounding villages, returning with the few provisions that he needed for his sustenance.

I went to see this old hermit, who offered to take me with him to his nets, and I accepted.

His boat was old, worm-eaten, and clumsy, and

the skinny old man rowed with a gentle and monotonous stroke that was soothing to the soul, already oppressed by the sadness of the land round about.

It seemed to me as if I were transported to olden times, in the midst of that ancient country, in that primitive boat, which was propelled by a man of another age.

He took up his nets, and threw the fish into the bottom of the boat, as the fishermen of the Bible might have done. Then he took me down to the end of the lake, where I suddenly perceived a ruin on the other side of the bank, a dilapidated hut, with an enormous red cross on the wall, that looked as if it might have been traced with blood, as it gleamed in the last rays of the setting sun.

"What is that?" I asked.

"That is where Judas died," the man replied, crossing himself.

I was not surprised, being almost prepared for this strange answer. Still I asked:

"Judas? What Judas?"

"The Wandering Jew, Monsieur," he added.

I asked him to tell me this legend.

But it was better than a legend, being a true story, and quite a recent one, since Uncle Joseph had known the man.

This hut had formerly been occupied by a large woman, a kind of beggar, who lived on public charity.

Uncle Joseph did not remember from whom she had this hut. One evening an old man with a white beard, who seemed to be at least two hundred years old, and who could hardly drag himself along, asked alms of this miserable woman, as he passed her dwelling.

"Sit down, father," she replied; "everything here belongs to all the world, since it comes from all the world."

He sat down on a stone before the door. He shared the woman's bread, her bed of leaves, and her house.

He did not leave her again, for he had come to the end of his travels.

"It was Our Lady the Virgin who permitted this, Monsieur," Joseph added, "it being a woman who had opened her door to a Judas, for this old vagabond was the Wandering Jew. It was not known at first in the country, but the people suspected it very soon, because he was always walking; it had become so much second nature to him."

And suspicion had been aroused by still another thing. This woman, who kept that stranger with her, was thought to be a Jewess, for no one had ever seen her at church. For ten miles around no one ever called her anything else but the Jewess.

When the little country children saw her come to beg they cried out:

"Mamma, mamma, here is the Jewess!"

The old man and she began to go out together into the neighboring districts, holding out their hands at all the doors, stammering supplications into the ears of all the passers. They could be seen at all hours of the day, on by-paths, in the villages, or again eating bread, sitting in the noon heat under the shadow of some solitary tree.

And the country people began to call the beggar Old Judas.

One day he brought home in his sack two little live pigs, which a farmer had given him after he had cured the farmer of some sickness.

Soon he stopped begging, and devoted himself entirely to his pigs. He took them out to feed by the lake, or under isolated oaks, or in the near-by valleys. The woman, however, went about all day begging, but she always came back to him in the evening.

He also did not go to church, and no one ever had seen him cross himself before the wayside crucifixes. All this gave rise to much gossip.

One night his companion was attacked by a fever and began to tremble like a leaf in the wind. He went to the nearest town to get some medicine, and then he shut himself up with her, and was not seen for six days.

The priest, having heard that the "Jewess" was about to die, came to offer the consolation of his religion and administer the last sacrament. Was she a Jewess? He did not know. But in any case he wished to try to save her soul.

Hardly had he knocked at the door when old Judas appeared on the threshold, breathing hard, his eyes aflame, his long beard agitated, like rippling water, and he hurled blasphemies in an unknown language, extending his skinny arms in order to prevent the priest from entering.

The priest attempted to speak, offered his purse and his aid, but the old man kept on abusing him, making gestures with his hands as if throwing stones at him.

Then the priest retired, followed by the curses of the beggar.

The companion of old Judas died the following day. He buried her himself, in front of his door. They were people of so little account that no one took any interest in them.

Then they saw the man take his pigs out again to the lake, and up the hillsides. And he also begged again, to get food. But the people gave him hardly anything, as there was so much gossip about him. Every one knew, moreover, how he had treated the priest.

Then he disappeared. That was during Holy Week, but no one paid any attention to him.

But on Easter Sunday the boys and girls who had gone walking out to the lake heard a great noise in the hut. The door was locked; but the boys broke it in, and the two pigs ran out, jumping like goats. No one ever saw them again.

The whole crowd went in; they saw some old rags on the floor, the beggar's hat, some bones, clots of dried blood, and bits of flesh in the hollows of the skull.

His pigs had devoured him.

"This happened on Good Friday, Monsieur," Joseph concluded his story, "three hours after noon."

"How do you know that?" I asked him.

"There is no doubt about that," he replied.

I did not attempt to make him understand that it could easily happen that the famished animals had eaten their master, after he had died suddenly in his hut.

As for the cross on the wall, it had appeared one morning, and no one knew what hand had traced it in that strange color.

Since then no one doubted any longer that the Wandering Jew had died on this spot.

I myself believed it for one hour.



ON THE RIVER



RENTED a little country house last summer on the banks of the Seine, several leagues from Paris, and went out there to sleep every evening. After a few days I made the acquaintance of one of my neighbors, a man between thirty and forty, who certainly was the most curious specimen I ever met. He was an old boating man and infatuated with his favorite sport. He was always beside the water, on the water, or in the water. He must have been born in a boat, and he will certainly die in a boat at the last.

One evening as we were walking along the banks of the Seine I asked him to tell me some stories about his life on the water. The good man at once became animated; his whole expression changed; he became eloquent, almost poetical. There was in his heart one great passion, an absorbing, irresistible passion—the river.

“ Ah,” he said to me, “ how many memories I

have connected with that river you see flowing beside us! You people who live in streets know nothing about the river. But listen to a fisherman as he mentions the word. To him it is a mysterious thing, profound, unknown, a land of mirages and phantasmagoria, where one sees by night things that do not exist, hears sounds that one does not recognize, trembles without knowing why, as in passing through a cemetery; it is, in fact, the most sinister of cemeteries, one in which one has no tomb.

“The land seems limited to the river boatman; and on dark nights, when there is no moon, the river seems limitless. A sailor has not the same feeling for the sea. It is often remorseless and cruel, it is true; but it shrieks, it roars, it is honest, the great sea; while the river is silent and perfidious. It does not speak, it flows along without a sound; and this eternal motion of flowing water is more terrible to me than the high waves of the ocean.

“Dreamers maintain that the sea hides in its bosom vast tracts of blue where those who are drowned roam among the big fishes, amid strange forests and crystal grottoes. The river has only black depths where one rots in the slime. It is beautiful, however, when it sparkles in the light of the rising sun and gently laps its banks covered with whispering reeds.

“The poet says, speaking of the ocean:

O waves, what mournful tragedies ye know—
Deep waves, the dread of kneeling mothers' hearts!
Ye tell them to each other as ye roll
On flowing tide, and this it is that gives
The sad despairing tones unto your voice
As on ye roll at eve with mounting tide.

“ Well, I think that the stories whispered by the slender reeds, with their little soft voices, must be more sinister than the lugubrious tragedies told by the roaring of the waves.

“ But, as you have asked for some of my recollections, I will tell you of a singular adventure that happened to me ten years ago:

“ I was living, as I am now, in Mother Lafon’s house, and one of my closest friends, Louis Bernet, who has now given up boating, his low shoes, and his bare neck, to go into the Supreme Court, was living in the village of C——, two leagues farther down the river. We dined together every day, sometimes at his house, sometimes at mine.

“ One evening, as I was coming home alone and was pretty tired, rowing with difficulty my big boat, a twelve-footer, which I always took out at night, I stopped a few moments to draw breath near the reed-covered point yonder, about two hundred meters from the railway bridge. It was a magnificent night, the moon shone brightly, the river gleamed, the air was calm and soft. This peacefulness tempted me. I thought to myself that it would be pleasant to smoke a pipe in this spot. I took up my anchor and cast it into the river.

“ The boat floated downstream with the current, to the end of the chain, and then stopped, and I seated myself in the stern on my sheepskin and made myself as comfortable as possible. There was not a sound to be heard, except that I occasionally thought I could perceive an almost imperceptible lapping of the water against the bank, and I noticed taller groups of reeds which assumed strange shapes and seemed, at times, to move.

“ The river was perfectly calm, but I felt my-

self affected by the unusual silence that surrounded me. All the creatures, frogs and toads, those nocturnal singers of the marsh, were silent.

“ Suddenly a frog croaked to my right, and close beside me. I shuddered. It ceased, and I heard nothing more, and resolved to smoke to soothe my mind. But, although I was a noted colorer of pipes, I could not smoke; at the second draw I was nauseated, and gave up trying. I began to sing. The sound of my voice was distressing to me. So I lay still, but presently the slight motion of the boat disturbed me. It seemed to me as if she were making huge lurches, from bank to bank of the river, touching each bank alternately. Then I felt as if an invisible force, or being, were drawing her to the surface of the water and lifting her out, to let her fall again. I was tossed about as in a tempest, I heard noises around me. I sprang to my feet with a single bound. The water was glistening; all was calm.

“ I felt that my nerves were somewhat shaky, and I resolved to leave the spot. I pulled the anchor chain, the boat began to move; then I felt a resistance. I pulled harder; the anchor did not come up; it had caught on something at the bottom of the river and I could not raise it. I began pulling again, but all in vain. Then, with my oars, I turned the boat with its head upstream to change the position of the anchor. It was no use, it was still caught. I flew into a rage and shook the chain furiously. Nothing budged. I sat down, disheartened, and began to reflect on my situation. I could not dream of breaking this chain, or detaching it from the boat, for it was massive and was riveted at the bows to a piece of wood as thick as my arm.

However, as the weather was so fine, I thought that it probably would not be long before some fisherman came to my aid. My ill-luck had quieted me. I sat down and was able, at length, to smoke my pipe. I had a bottle of rum; I drank two or three glasses, and was able to laugh at the situation. It was very warm, so that, if need be, I could sleep out under the stars without any great harm.

“ Suddenly there was a little knock at the side of the boat. I gave a start, and a cold sweat broke out all over me. The noise was, doubtless, caused by some piece of wood borne along by the current; but that was enough, and I again became a prey to a strange nervous agitation. I seized the chain and tensed my muscles in a desperate effort. The anchor held firm. I sat down again, exhausted.

“ The river had slowly become enveloped in a thick white fog which lay close to the water, so that when I stood up I could see neither the river nor my feet nor my boat; but could perceive only the tops of the reeds, and farther off in the distance the plain, lying white in the moonlight, with big black patches rising up from it toward the sky, which were formed by groups of Italian poplars. I was as if buried to the waist in a cloud of cotton of singular whiteness, and all sorts of strange fancies came into my mind. I thought that some one was trying to climb into my boat, which I could no longer distinguish, and that the river, hidden by the thick fog, was full of strange creatures which were swimming all round me. I felt horribly uncomfortable, my forehead felt as if it had a tight band round it, my heart beat so that it almost suffocated me, and, almost beside myself, I thought of

swimming away from the place. But then, again, the very idea made me tremble with fear. I saw myself, lost, going by guesswork in this heavy fog, struggling about amid the grasses and reeds which I could not escape, my breath rattling with fear, neither seeing the bank nor finding my boat; and it seemed as if I would feel myself dragged down by the feet to the bottom of these black waters.

“ In fact, as I should have had to ascend the stream at least five hundred meters before finding a spot free from grasses and rushes where I could land, there were nine chances to one that I could not find my way in the fog and that I should drown, no matter how well I could swim.

“ I tried to reason with myself. My will made me resolve not to be afraid, but there was something in me besides my will, and that other thing was afraid. I asked myself what there was to be afraid of. My brave ‘ego’ ridiculed my coward ‘ego,’ and never did I realize as on that day the existence in us of two rival personalities, one desiring a thing, the other resisting, and each winning the day in turn.

“ This stupid, inexplicable fear increased and became terror. I remained motionless, my eyes staring, my ears on the stretch with expectation. Of what? I did not know, but it must be something terrible. I believe if it had occurred to a fish to jump out of the water, as often happens, nothing more would have been required to make me fall over, stiff and unconscious.

“ However, by a violent effort I succeeded in becoming almost rational again. I took up my bottle of rum and took several pulls. Then an idea came to me, and I began to shout with all my might

toward all the points of the compass in succession. When my throat was absolutely paralyzed I listened. A dog was howling at a great distance.

“ I drank some more rum and stretched myself out at the bottom of the boat. I remained there about an hour, perhaps two, not sleeping, my eyes wide open, with nightmares all about me. I did not dare to rise, and yet I intensely longed to do so. I delayed it from moment to moment. I said to myself: ‘ Come, get up!’ and I was afraid to move. At last I raised myself with infinite caution as though my life depended on the slightest sound that I might make, and looked over the edge of the boat.

“ I was dazzled by the most marvelous, the most astonishing sight that it is possible to see. It was one of those phantasmagoria of fairyland, one of those sights described by travelers on their return from distant lands, whom we listen to without believing.

“ The fog which, two hours before, had floated on the water had gradually cleared off and massed on the banks, leaving the river absolutely clear; while it formed on either bank an uninterrupted wall six or seven meters high, which shone in the moonlight with the dazzling brilliance of snow. One saw nothing but the river gleaming with light between these two white mountains; and high above my head sailed the great full moon, in the midst of a bluish, milky sky.

“ All the creatures in the water were awake. The frogs croaked furiously, while every few moments I heard, first to the right and then to the left, the abrupt, monotonous, and mournful metallic note of the bullfrogs. Strange to say, I was no longer

afraid. I was in the midst of such an unusual landscape that the most remarkable things would not have astonished me.

“How long this lasted I do not know, for I ended by falling asleep. When I opened my eyes the moon had gone down and the sky was full of clouds. The water lapped mournfully, the wind was blowing, it was pitch dark.

“I drank the rest of the rum, then listened, while I trembled, to the rustling of the reeds and the foreboding sound of the river. I tried to see, but could not distinguish my boat, nor even my hands, which I held up close to my eyes.

“Little by little, however, the blackness became less intense. All at once I thought I noticed a shadow gliding past quite near me. I shouted; a voice replied; it was a fisherman. I called him; he came near, and I told him of my ill-luck. He rowed his boat alongside of mine, and together we pulled at the anchor chain. The anchor did not move. Day came, gloomy gray, rainy and cold, one of those days that bring one sorrows and misfortunes. I saw another boat. We hailed it. The man on board of her joined his efforts to ours, and gradually the anchor yielded. It rose, but slowly, slowly, loaded down by a considerable weight. At length we perceived a black mass, and we drew it on board.

“It was the corpse of an old woman with a big stone round her neck.”



A PORTRAIT



HELLO! there's Milial!" said somebody near me. I looked at the man who had been pointed out, as I had been wishing for a long time to meet this Don Juan.

He was no longer young. His gray hair looked a little like those fur bonnets worn by certain Northern peoples, and his long beard, which fell down over his chest, had also somewhat the appearance of fur. He was talking with a lady, leaning toward her, speaking in a low voice and looking at her with an expression full of respect and tenderness.

I knew his life, or at least as much as was known of it. He had loved madly several times; and there had been certain tragedies with which his name had been connected. When I spoke to women who were the loudest in his praise, and asked them whence came this power, they always answered, after thinking for a while: "I don't know—he has a certain charm about him."

He was certainly not handsome. He had none of the elegance that we ascribe to conquerors of feminine hearts. I wondered what might be his hidden charm. Was it mental? I never had heard of a clever saying of his. In his glance? Perhaps. Or in his voice? The voices of some beings have a certain irresistible attraction, almost suggesting the flavor of things good to eat. One is hungry for them, and the sound of their words penetrates us like a dainty morsel. A friend was passing. I asked him: "Do you know Monsieur Milial?"

"Yes."

"Introduce us."

A minute later we were shaking hands and talking in the doorway. What he said was correct, agreeable to hear; it contained no irritable thought. The voice was sweet, soft, caressing, musical; but I had heard others much more attractive, much more moving. One listened to him with pleasure, just as one would look at a pretty little brook. No tension of the mind was necessary in order to follow him, no hidden meaning aroused curiosity, no expectation awoke interest. His conversation was rather restful, but it did not awaken in one either a desire to answer, to contradict, or to approve; and it was as easy to answer him as it was to listen to him. The response came to the lips of its own accord, as soon as he had finished talking, and phrases turned toward him as if he had naturally aroused them.

One thought soon struck me. I had known him for a quarter of an hour, and it seemed as if he were already one of my old friends, that I had known all about him for a long time; his face, his gestures, his voice, his ideas. Suddenly, after a few minutes of

conversation, he seemed already to be installed in my intimacy. All constraint disappeared between us, and, had he so desired, I might have confided in him as one confides only in old friends.

Certainly there was some mystery about him. Those barriers that are closed between most people, and that are lowered with time when sympathy, similar tastes, equal intellectual culture, and constant intercourse remove constraint—those barriers seemed not to exist between him and me, and no doubt this was the case between him and all people, both men and women, whom fate threw in his path.

After half an hour we parted, promising to see each other often, and he gave me his address after inviting me to take luncheon with him in two days.

I forgot what hour he had stated, and I arrived too soon; he was not yet home. A correct and silent domestic showed me into a beautiful, quiet, softly lighted parlor. I felt comfortable there, at home. How often I have noticed the influence of apartments on the character and on the mind! There are some which make one feel foolish; in others, on the contrary, one always feels lively. Some make us sad, although well lighted and decorated in light-colored furniture; others cheer us up, although hung with somber material. Our eye, like our heart, has its likes and dislikes, of which it does not inform us, and which it secretly imposes on our temperament. The harmony of furniture, walls, the style of an *ensemble*, act immediately on our mental state, just as the air from the woods, the sea, or the mountains modifies our physical natures.

I sat down on a cushion-covered divan, and felt myself suddenly rested and supported by these lit-

tle silk bags of feathers, as if the outline of my body had been marked out beforehand on this couch.

Then I looked about. There was nothing striking about the room; everywhere were beautiful and modest things, simple and rare furniture, Oriental curtains which did not seem to come from a department store but from the interior of a harem; and exactly opposite me hung the portrait of a woman. It was a portrait of medium size, showing the head and the upper part of the body, and the hands, which were holding a book. She was young, bare-headed; ribbons were woven in her hair; she was smiling sadly. Was it because she was bareheaded, or as a result of her very natural manner? I never have seen a portrait of a lady which seemed so much in its place as that one in that dwelling. Of all those I know I have seen nothing like that one. All those that I know are on exhibition, whether the lady be dressed in her gaudiest gown, with an attractive headdress and a look which shows that she is posing first of all before the artist and then before those who will look at her, or whether she has taken a comfortable attitude in an ordinary gown. Some are standing majestically, in all their beauty, which is not at all natural to them in life. All of them have something, a flower or a jewel, a crease in the dress or a curve of the lip, which one feels to have been placed there for effect by the artist. Whether they wear a hat or merely their hair one can immediately notice that they are not entirely natural. Why? One cannot say without knowing them, but the effect is there. They seem to be calling somewhere, on people whom they wish to please and to whom they wish to appear at their

best advantage; and they have studied their attitudes, sometimes modest, sometimes haughty.

What could one say about this one? She was at home and alone. Yes, she was alone, for she was smiling as one smiles when thinking in solitude of something sad or sweet; and not as one smiles when one is being watched. She seemed so much alone and so much at home that she made the whole large apartment seem absolutely empty. She alone lived in it, filled it, gave it life. Many people might come in and converse, laugh, even sing; she would still be alone with a solitary smile, and she alone would give it life with her pictured gaze.

That look also was unique. It fell directly on me, fixed and caressing, without seeing me. All portraits know that they are being watched, and they answer with their eyes, which see, think, follow us without leaving us, from the very moment we enter the apartment they inhabit. This one did not see me; it saw nothing, although its look was fixed directly on me. I remembered the surprising verse of Baudelaire:

“And your eyes, attractive as those of a portrait.”

They did indeed attract me in an irresistible manner; those painted eyes which had lived, or which were, perhaps, still living, threw over me a strange, powerful spell. Oh, what an infinite and tender charm, like a passing breeze, like a dying sunset of lilac, rose, and blue, a little sad like the approaching night, which comes behind the somber frame and out of those impenetrable eyes! Those eyes, created by a few strokes from a brush, hide behind them the mystery of that which seems to be and which does not exist, which can appear in the

eyes of a woman, which can make love blossom within us.

The door opened and M. Milial entered. He excused himself for being late. I excused myself for being ahead of time. Then I said: " Might I ask you who is this lady? "

He answered: " That is my mother. She died very young."

Then I understood whence came the inexplicable attraction of this man.



JULIE ROMAIN



WO years ago this spring I was making a walking tour along the shore of the Mediterranean. Is there anything more pleasant than to meditate while walking at a good pace along a highway? One walks in the sunlight, through the caressing breeze, at the foot of the mountains, along the coast of the sea. And one dreams! What a flood of illusions, loves, adventures pass through a pedestrian's mind during a two hours' march! What a crowd of confused and joyous hopes enter into you with the mild, light air! You drink them in with the breeze, and they awaken in your heart a longing for happiness which increases with the hunger called forth by the march. The fleeting, charming ideas fly and sing like birds.

I was following that long road which goes from Saint Raphael to Italy, or, rather, that long, splendid panoramic passageway which seems made for the

representation of all the love-poems of earth. And I thought that from Cannes, where one poses, to Monaco, where one gambles, people come to this spot of the earth for hardly any other purpose than to get embroiled or to throw away money on chance games, displaying under this delicious sky, and in this garden of roses and oranges, all base vanities and foolish pretensions and vile lusts, showing up the human spirit such as it is, rampant, ignorant, arrogant, and full of cupidity.

Suddenly I saw some villas in one of those ravishing bays that one meets at every turn of the mountain; there were only four or five fronting the sea at the foot of the mountain, and behind them a wild fir wood sloped into two great valleys, that were untraversed by roads. I stopped short before one of these *châlets*, it was so pretty: a small white house with brown trimmings, overrun with rambler roses up to the top.

The garden was a mass of flowers, of all colors and all kinds, mixed in a coquettish, well-planned disorder. The lawn was full of them, big pots flanked each side of every step of the porch, pink or yellow bunches framed each window, and the terrace with the stone balustrade, which inclosed this pretty little dwelling, had a garland of enormous red bells, like drops of blood. Behind the house I saw a long avenue of orange trees in blossom, which went up to the foot of the mountain.

Over the door appeared the name, "Villa d'Antan," in small gold letters.

I asked myself what poet or what fairy was living there, what inspired, solitary being had discovered this spot, and created this dream house, which seemed to nestle in a bouquet.

A workman was breaking stones up the street, and I went to ask him the name of the proprietor of this jewel.

"It is Madame Julie Romain," he replied.

Julie Romain! In my childhood, long ago, I had heard them speak of this great actress, the rival of Rachel.

No woman ever was more applauded and more loved—especially more loved! What duels and suicides on her account, and what sensational adventures! How old was this seductive woman now? Sixty, seventy, seventy-five! Julie Romain here, in this house! The woman who had been adored by the greatest musician and the most exquisite poet of our land! I still remember the sensation (I was then twelve years of age) which her flight to Sicily with the latter, after her rupture with the former, caused throughout France.

She had left one evening, after a *première*, where the audience had applauded her for a whole half hour, and had recalled her eleven times in succession. She had gone away with the poet, in a post-chaise, as was the way then; they had crossed the sea, to love each other in that antique island, the daughter of Greece, in that immense orange wood which surrounds Palermo, and which is called the "Shell of Gold."

People told of their ascension of Mount Etna and how they had leaned over the immense crater, arm in arm, cheek to cheek, as if to throw themselves into the very hole.

Now he was dead, that maker of verses so moving and so profound that they made a whole generation giddy, so subtle and so mysterious that they opened a new world to the younger poets.

The other one also was dead—the deserted one, who had found for her phrases of music that are alive in the memories of all, phrases of triumph and of despair, maddening and lacerating.

And she was there, in that house veiled by flowers!

I did not hesitate, but rang the bell.

A small servant answered, a boy of eighteen with awkward mien and clumsy hands. I penciled on my card a gallant compliment to the actress, begging her to receive me. Perhaps, if she knew my name, she would open her door to me.

The little valet took it in, and then he came back, asking me to follow him. He led me to a neat and decorous salon, furnished in the Louis-Philippe style, with stiff and heavy furniture, from which a little maid of sixteen, slender but not pretty, took off the covers in my honor.

Then I was left alone.

On the walls hung three portraits, that of the actress in one of her rôles, that of the poet in his close-fitting greatcoat and the ruffled shirt then in style, and that of the musician seated at a piano.

She, blond, charming, but affected, according to the fashion of her day, was smiling, with her pretty mouth and blue eyes; the painting was careful, fine, elegant, but lifeless.

Those faces seemed to be already looking upon posterity.

The whole place had the air of a bygone time, of days done and men disappeared.

A door opened and a little woman entered, old, very old, very small, with white hair and white eyebrows, a veritable white mouse, and as quick and furtive of movement.

She held out her hand to me, saying in a voice still fresh, sonorous, and vibrant:

“ Thank you, Monsieur. How kind it is of the men of to-day to remember the women of yesterday! Sit down.”

I told her that her house had attracted me, that I had inquired for the proprietor's name, and that, on learning it, I could not resist the desire to ring her bell.

“ This gives me all the more pleasure, Monsieur,” she replied, “ as it is the first time that such a thing has happened. When I received your card, with the gracious note, I trembled as if an old friend who had disappeared for twenty years had been announced to me. I am like a dead body, whom no one remembers, of whom no one will think until the day when I shall actually die; then the newspapers will mention Julie Romain for three days, relating anecdotes and details of my life, reviving memories, and praising me greatly. Then all will be over with me.”

After a few moments of silence, she continued:

“ And this will not be so very long now. In a few months, in a few days, nothing will remain but a little skeleton of this little woman who is now alive.”

She raised her eyes toward her portrait, which smiled down upon this caricature of herself; then she looked at those of the two men, the disdainful poet and the inspired musician, who seemed to say: “ What does this ruin want of us? ”

An indefinable, poignant, irresistible sadness overwhelmed my heart, the sadness of existences that have had their day, but who are still debating with their memories, like a person drowning.

From my seat I could see on the highroad the handsome carriages that were whirling from Nice to Monaco; inside them I saw young, pretty, rich, and happy women and smiling, satisfied men. Following my eye, she understood my thought and murmured with a smile of resignation:

“ One cannot both be and have been.”

“ How beautiful life must have been for you! ”
I said.

She heaved a great sigh.

“ Beautiful and sweet! And for that reason I regret it so much.”

I saw that she was disposed to talk of herself; so I began to question her, gently and discreetly, as one might touch bruised flesh.

She spoke of her successes, her intoxications, and her friends, of her whole triumphant existence.

“ Was it on the stage that you found your most intense joys, your true happiness? ” I asked.

“ Oh, no! ” she replied quickly.

I smiled; then, raising her eyes to the two portraits, she said, with a sad glance:

“ It was with them.”

“ Which one? ” I could not help asking.

“ Both. I even confuse them a little now in my old woman’s memory, and then I feel remorse.”

“ Then, Madame, your acknowledgment is not to them, but to Love itself. They were merely its interpreters.”

“ That is possible. But what interpreters! ”

“ Are you sure that you have not been, or that you might not have been, loved as well or better by a simple man, but not a great man, who would have offered to you his whole life and heart, all his

thoughts, all his days, his whole being; while these gave you two redoubtable rivals, Music and Poetry? ”

“ No, Monsieur, no! ” she exclaimed emphatically, with that still youthful voice, which caused the soul to vibrate. “ Another one might perhaps have loved me more, but he would not have loved me as these did. Ah! those two sang to me of the music of love as no one else in the world could have sung of it. How they intoxicated me! Could any other man express what they knew so well how to express in tones and in words? Is it enough merely to love if one cannot put all the poetry and all the music of heaven and earth into love? And they knew how to make a woman delirious with songs and with words. Yes, perhaps there was more of illusion than of reality in our passion; but these illusions lift you into the clouds, while realities always leave you trailing in the dust. If others have loved me more, through these two I have understood, felt, and worshiped love.”

Suddenly she began to weep.

She wept silently, shedding tears of despair.

I pretended not to see, looking off into the distance. She resumed, after a few minutes:

“ You see, Monsieur, with nearly every one the heart ages with the body. But this has not happened with me. My body is sixty-nine years old, while my poor heart is only twenty. And that is the reason why I live all alone, with my flowers and my dreams.”

There was a long silence between us. She grew calmer and continued, smiling:

“ How you would laugh at me, if you knew, if you knew how I pass my evenings, when the weather

is fine. I am ashamed and I pity myself at the same time."

Beg how I might, she would not tell me what she did; then I rose to leave.

"Already!" she exclaimed.

And as I said that I wished to dine at Monte Carlo, she asked timidly:

"Will you not dine with me? It would give me a great deal of pleasure."

I accepted at once. She rang, delighted; and after giving some orders to the little maid she took me over her house.

A kind of glass-inclosed veranda, filled with shrubs, opened into the dining-room, revealing at the farther end the long avenue of orange trees extending to the foot of the mountain. A low seat, hidden by plants, indicated that the old actress often came to sit down there.

Then we went into the garden, to look at the flowers. Evening fell softly, one of those calm, moist evenings when the earth breathes forth all her perfumes. Daylight was almost gone when we sat down at table. The dinner was good and it lasted a long time; during which we became intimate friends, she and I, when she understood what a profound sympathy she had aroused in my heart. She had taken two thimblefuls of wine, as the phrase went formerly, and had grown more confiding and expansive.

"Come, let us look at the moon," she said. "I adore the good moon. She has been the witness of my most intense joys. It seems to me that all my memories are there, and that I need only look at her to bring them all back to me. And even . . . sometimes . . . in the evening . . . I offer

to myself a pretty play . . . yes, pretty . . . if you only knew! But no, you would laugh at me . . . I cannot . . . I dare not . . . no, no . . . really . . . no . . . ”

I implored her to tell me what it was.

“ Come, now! come, tell me; I promise you that I will not laugh . . . I swear it to you . . . come, now! ”

She hesitated. I took her hands—those poor little hands, so thin and so cold!—and I kissed them one after the other, several times, as her lovers had once kissed them. She was moved, and hesitated.

“ You promise me not to laugh? ”

“ Yes, I swear it to you. ”

“ Well, then, come. ”

She rose, and as the little domestic, awkward in his green livery, removed the chair behind her, she whispered quickly a few words into his ear.

“ Yes, Madame, at once, ” he replied.

She took my arm and led me to the veranda.

The avenue of oranges was really splendid to see. The full moon made a narrow path of silver, a long bright line, which fell on the yellow sand, between the round, opaque crowns of the dark trees.

As these trees were in bloom, their strong, sweet perfume filled the night, and swarming among their dark foliage I saw thousands of fireflies, which look like seeds fallen from the stars.

“ Oh, what a setting for a love scene! ” I exclaimed.

She smiled.

“ Is not that true? Is not that true? You will see! ”

And she made me sit down beside her.

“ This is what makes one long for more life. ”

But you hardly think of these things, you men of to-day. You are speculators, merchants, and men of affairs. You no longer even know how to talk with us. When I say 'you,' I mean young men in general. Love has been turned into a *liaison*, which very often begins with an unpaid dressmaker's bill. If you think the bill is dearer than the woman, you disappear; but if you hold the woman more highly, you pay it. Nice morals—and nice kind of love!"

She took my hand.

"Look!"

I looked, astonished and delighted. Down there at the end of the avenue, in the moon's path, were two young people, with their arms around each other's waist. They were walking along, interlaced, charming, with short, little steps, crossing the flakes of light, which illuminated them momentarily, and then sinking back into the shadow. The youth was dressed in a suit of white satin, such as men wore in the eighteenth century, and had on a hat with an ostrich plume. The girl was arrayed in a gown with *panniers*, and the high, powdered coiffure of the handsome dames of the time of the Regency.

They stopped a hundred paces from us, and, standing in the middle of the avenue, they kissed each other with graceful gestures.

Suddenly I recognized the two little servants. Then one of those dreadful fits of laughter that convulse you made me twist in my chair. But I did not laugh aloud. I resisted, convulsed and feeling almost ill, as the man whose leg is cut off resists the impulse to cry out.

As the young pair turned toward the farther end of the avenue they again became delightful. They

went farther and farther away, finally disappearing as a dream disappears. I no longer saw them. The avenue seemed a sad place.

I took my leave at once, so as not to see them again, for I guessed that this little play would last a long time, awakening, as it did, a whole past of love and of stage scenery; the factitious past, deceitful and seductive, false but charming, which still stirred the heart of this amorous old comedienne.



OUR LETTERS



IGHT hours of railway travel induce sleep for some persons and insomnia for others. With me, any journey prevents my sleeping on the following night.

At about five o'clock I arrived at the estate of Abelle, which belongs to my friends the Murets d'Artus, to spend three weeks there. It is a pretty house, built by one of their grandfathers in the style of the latter half of the last century. Therefore it has that intimate character of dwellings that have always been inhabited, furnished, and enlivened by the same people. Nothing changes; nothing alters the soul of the dwelling, from which the furniture has never been taken out, the tapestries never unnailed, thus becoming worn out, faded, discolored, on the same walls. None of the old furniture leaves the place; only from time to time it is moved a little to make room for a new piece, which enters there like a new-born infant in the midst of brothers and sisters.

The house is on a hill in the center of a park which slopes down to the river, where there is a little stone bridge. Beyond the water the fields stretch out in the distance, and here one can see the cows wandering around, pasturing on the moist grass; their eyes seem full of the dew, mist, and freshness of the pasture. I love this dwelling, just as one loves a thing which one ardently desires to possess. I return here every autumn with infinite delight; I leave with regret.

After I had dined with this friendly family, by whom I was received like a relative, I asked my friend, Paul Muret: "Which room did you give me this year?"

"Aunt Rose's room."

An hour later, followed by her three children, two little girls and a boy, Madame Muret d'Artus installed me in Aunt Rose's room, where I had not yet slept.

When I was alone I examined the walls, the furniture, the general aspect of the room, in order to attune my mind to it. I knew it but little, as I had entered it only once or twice, and I looked indifferently at a pastel portrait of Aunt Rose, who gave her name to the room.

This old Aunt Rose, with her curls, looking at me from behind the glass, made very little impression on my mind. She looked to me like a woman of former days, with principles and precepts as strong on the maxims of morality as on cooking recipes, one of these old aunts who are the bugbear of gayety and the morose and wrinkled angel of provincial families.

I never had heard her spoken of; I knew nothing of her life or of her death. Did she belong to

this century or to the preceding one? Had she left this earth after a calm or a stormy existence? Had she given up to heaven the pure soul of an old maid, the calm soul of a spouse, the tender one of a mother, or one moved by love? What difference did it make? The name alone, "Aunt Rose," seemed ridiculous, common, ugly.

I picked up a candle and looked at her severe face, hanging far up in an old gilt frame. Then, as I found it insignificant, disagreeable, even unsympathetic, I began to examine the furniture. It dated from the period of Louis XVI, the Revolution, and the Directorate. Not a chair, not a curtain had entered this room since then, and it gave out the subtle odor of memories, which is the combined odor of wood, cloth, chairs, hangings, peculiar to places wherein have lived hearts that have loved and suffered.

I retired but did not sleep. After I had tossed about for an hour or two, I decided to get up and write some letters.

I opened a little mahogany desk with brass trimmings, which was placed between the two windows, in hope of finding some ink and paper; but all I found was a quill pen, very much worn, and chewed at the end. I was about to close this piece of furniture, when a shining spot attracted my attention: it looked like the yellow head of a nail. I scratched it with my finger, and it seemed to move. I seized it between two finger nails, and pulled as hard as I could. It came toward me gently. It was a gold pin which had been slipped into and hidden in a hole in the wood.

Why? I immediately thought that it must have served to work some spring which hid a secret, and

I looked. It took a long time. After about two hours of investigation, I discovered another hole opposite the first one, but at the bottom of the groove. Into this I stuck my pin: a little board sprang toward my face, and I saw two packages of yellow letters, tied with a blue ribbon.

I read them. Here are two of them:

"So you wish me to return to you your letters, my dearest friend. Here they are, but it pains me to obey. Of what are you afraid? That I might lose them? But they are under lock and key. Do you fear that they might be stolen? I guard against that, for they are my dearest treasure.

"Yes, it pains me deeply. I wondered whether, perhaps, you might not be feeling some regret! Not regret at having loved me, for I know that you still do, but the regret of having expressed on white paper this living love in hours when your heart did not confide in me, but in the pen that you held in your hand. When we love, we have need of confession, need of talking or writing, and we either talk or write. Words fly away, those sweet words made of music, air and tenderness, warm and light, which escape as soon as they are uttered, which remain in the memory alone, but which one can neither see, touch, nor kiss, as one can do with the words written by your hand. Your letters? Yes, I am returning them to you! But with what sorrow!

"Undoubtedly you must have had the delicate shame of unerasable terms. In your sensitive and timid soul you must have regretted having written to a man that you loved him. You remembered phrases which moved your memories, and you said to yourself: 'I will make ashes of these words.'

"Be satisfied and calm. Here are your letters. I love you."

"MY FRIEND:

"No, you have not understood me, you have not guessed. I do not regret, and I never shall, that I have told you of my tenderness. I will always write to you, but you shall return to me my letters as soon as you have read them.

"I shall shock you, my friend, when I tell you the reason

for this demand. It is not poetic, as you imagined, but practical. I am afraid, not of you, but of chance. I am guilty. I do not wish my fault to affect others than myself.

"Understand me well. You and I may both die. You might fall off your horse, since you ride every day; you might die from a sudden attack, from a duel, from heart disease, from a carriage accident, in a thousand ways. For, if there is only one death, there are more ways of its reaching us than there are days for us to live.

"Then your sisters, your brother, or your sister-in-law might find my letters! Do you think that they love me? I doubt it. And then, even if they adored me, is it possible for two women and one man to know a secret—such a secret!—and not to tell of it?

"I seem to be saying very disagreeable things, speaking first of your death, and then suspecting the discreetness of your relatives.

"But don't all of us die sooner or later? And it is almost certain that one of us will precede the other under the ground. We must therefore foresee all dangers, even that one.

"As for me, I will keep your letters beside mine, in the secret of my little desk. I will show them to you there, sleeping side by side in their silken hiding place, full of our love, like lovers in a tomb.

"You will say to me: 'But if you should die first, my dear, your husband will find these letters.'

"Oh! I fear nothing. First of all, he does not know the secret of my desk, and then he will not look for it. And even if he finds it after my death, I fear nothing.

"Did you ever stop to think of all the love letters that have been found after death? I have been thinking of this for a long time, and that is the reason I decided to ask you for my letters.

"Think that never, do you understand, never, does a woman burn, tear, or destroy the letters in which it is told her that she is loved. That is our whole life, our whole hope, expectation, and dream. These little papers which bear our name in caressing terms are relics which we adore; they are chapels in which we are the saints. Our love letters are our titles to beauty, grace, seduction, the intimate vanity of our womanhood; they are the treasures of our heart. No, a

woman does not destroy these secrets and delicious archives of her life.

"But, like everybody else, we die, and then—then these letters are found! Who finds them? The husband. Then what does he do? Nothing. He burns them.

"Oh, I have thought a great deal about that! Just think that every day women are dying who have been loved; every day the traces and proofs of their fault fall in the hands of their husbands, and that there is never a scandal, never a duel.

"Think, my dear, of what a man's heart is. He avenges himself on a living woman; he fights with the man who has dishonored her, kills him while she lives, because, well, why? I do not know exactly why. But if, after her death, he finds similar proofs, he burns them and no one is the wiser, and he continues to shake hands with the friend of the dead woman, and feels quite at ease that these letters should not have fallen into strange hands, and that they are destroyed.

"Oh, how many men I know among my friends who must have burned such proofs, and who pretend to know nothing, and yet who would have fought madly had they found them when she was still alive! But she is dead. Honor has changed. The tomb is the limit of conjugal sinning.

"Therefore, I can safely keep our letters, which, in your hands, would be a menace to both of us. Do you dare to say that I am not right?

"I love you and kiss you.

ROSE."

I raised my eyes to the portrait of Aunt Rose, and as I looked at her severe, wrinkled face, I thought of all those women's souls which we do not know, and which we suppose to be so different from what they really are, whose inborn and simple cunning we never can penetrate, their quiet duplicity; and a verse of De Vigny returned to my memory:

"Always this comrade whose heart is uncertain."



DARKNESS

A NIGHTMARE



LOVE darkness passionately, as one loves his country or his sweetheart, with an instinctive, deep, unconquerable love. I love it with all my senses, with my eyes, which see it, my nose, which breathes it, my ears, which hear the silence, with my whole body, which is caressed by the shadows. The larks sing in the sunlight, in the blue sky, in the sweet warm air of clear mornings. The owl, like a black spot, flees through the dark night, and, intoxicated by the immensity of darkness, he emits his sinister cry.

Daylight tires and bores me; it is brutal and noisy. I rise with difficulty, dress languidly, go out with regret, and every step, every movement, gesture, speech, thought, tires me as if I were lifting a crushing burden.

When the sun sets a confused joy fills my whole body. I rouse myself and take heart. As darkness grows, I feel myself quite different, younger,

stronger, more alert, happier. I watch this gentle shade come down from the sky and deepen: it drowns the city, like an impenetrable cloak, it hides, erases, and destroys color and forms, surrounds houses, creatures, and monuments with its imperceptibly growing shadow.

Then I feel like crying out with joy, like an owl, like running over the roofs like a cat, and an impetuous and unconquerable desire to love warms my blood.

Sometimes I walk through the dark suburbs, sometimes through the forests near Paris, where I hear my sisters the beasts, and my brothers the poachers, roaming about.

Whatever one loves madly always kills one. But how can I explain what has happened to me? How can I even make it understood that I can tell it? I do not know; all I know is that it is there!

Yesterday—was it yesterday?—yes, probably, unless it was the day before—another day, another month, another year—I do not know, but it must be yesterday, since daylight has not yet appeared, since the sun has not risen. But how long is night lasting? How long? Who can say? Who will ever know?

Well, yesterday I went out after dinner as I do every evening. The weather was beautiful. As I walked toward the boulevards, I gazed overhead at this immense dome of darkness dotted with stars.

Everything was light in the clear air, from the planets to the gaslights. So many lights were burning above and below that the darkness seemed luminous. Clear nights are more enjoyable than the finest days of sunlight.

On the boulevards the cafés were flaring, people

were drinking, laughing, and passing by. I went into some theater for a few minutes. Which theater? I do not know. It was so bright inside that I grew sad and left, my spirits a little dampened by this shock of brutal light, by the factitious scintillation of the enormous crystal luster, by the fiery row of footlights, by the dreariness of false and crude brilliancy. I reached the Champs-Élysées, where the cafés-concerts shone through the foliage like blazing fires. The chestnut trees, tinged with yellow light, looked phosphorescent. And the arc-lights, like pale, shining leaves or gigantic living pearls, made the poor gaslights look feeble beside their mysterious white brilliancy.

I stopped under the Arc de Triomphe to look at the long, beautiful, starry avenue leading toward Paris, between two lines of fire! Then I looked at the stars, thrown haphazard in the immensity of infinity, where they combine strange figures which make people dream.

I went into the Bois de Boulogne, and I stayed there for a long, long time. A strange shivering had taken hold of me, an unforeseen and powerful emotion, an exaltation of the mind that bordered on insanity. For a long time I walked straight ahead. Then I came back.

What time was it when I passed again under the Arc de Triomphe? I do not know. The city was sleeping, and heavy black clouds were slowly stretching over the sky.

For the first time I felt that something new and strange was about to happen. It seemed as if it were cold, as if the air were growing thicker, and night, my beloved night, was hanging heavy in my heart. The avenue was now deserted. Alone, two

policemen were walking about the cabstand and on the sidewalk, barely lighted by the gas-jets, which seemed to be dying. A string of wagons was going to that great market, the Halles. They were rolling along slowly, loaded down with carrots, turnips, and cabbages. The drivers, out of sight, were sleeping, while the horses plodded along, each wagon noiselessly following the preceding one over the wooden pavement. Under each light the carrots shone red, the turnips white, the cabbages green; and these red, white, and green loads followed each other endlessly. I accompanied them for a distance, then I turned off at the Rue Royale and gained the boulevards. Not a soul could be seen; there were no more brightly lighted cafés; everything was silent. I never had seen Paris so dead, so utterly deserted. I pulled forth my watch. It was two o'clock.

Something seemed to compel me to continue walking. So I went to the Bastille. I thought that I never had seen a night so dark, for I could not even distinguish the July Column, the top of which was lost in impenetrable blackness. A great curtain of black clouds had drowned the stars and seemed to be hovering over the earth as if to swallow it up.

I turned back. There was no longer any one about me. At the Place du Château d'Eau, however, a drunkard almost bumped into me, and then disappeared. For a long time I heard the echoes of his uneven steps. I kept on walking. On the heights of the Faubourg Montmartre a cab passed, going toward the Seine. I called. The coachman did not answer. A woman was wandering about near the Rue Drouot; I heard her say: "Monsieur, listen——" I quickened my step in order to avoid her outstretched hand. Then nothing more. In front

of the Vaudeville I found a ragpicker searching in the gutter. His little lantern was held a few inches above the ground. I asked him: "What time is it, my man?"

He grunted: "How do I know? I have no watch."

Then I suddenly noticed that the street lights were out. I know that they are extinguished early, before daylight, for reasons of economy; but day was still far away, so far away!

"Let us go to the Halles," I thought; "at least I may find some life there."

I set out again, but I could not see clearly enough to find my way. I went forward slowly, as one walks in a forest, recognizing and counting the streets.

In front of the Crédit Lyonnais a dog growled. I turned through the Rue de Grammont, and lost myself; I wandered around, and finally recognized the Bourse by the iron railing which surrounds it. The whole of Paris was sleeping, in deep, frightful sleep. In the distance, however, I could hear a cab rolling by, just one cab—perhaps it was the one which had passed a while ago. I tried to catch up with it, going toward the noise of its wheels, through the dark, solitary streets, as dark as death.

I lost myself again. Where was I? What a mad idea to put the gas out so early! Not a soul, not a single belated person, not one howl from loving cats. Nothing!

Where were the policemen? I asked myself. "If I call they will come." I called loudly. No one answered. I called louder. My voice seemed to be without an echo, weak, smothered, crushed by this impenetrable darkness.

I bawled: "Help! help! help!" My desperate cry remained without response. What time could it be? I drew my watch, but I had no matches. I listened to the regular tick-tack of the little mechanism with a strange and unknown joy. It seemed to be alive. I was less alone. What a mystery! I went on again like a blind man, feeling the walls with my cane, and all the time raising my eyes to the sky, hoping that day might at last appear; but the sky was black—black even than the city.

What time could it be? It seemed to me as if I had been walking forever, for my legs were bending under me; I was out of breath and suffering fearful pangs of hunger.

I decided to ring at the first door I should find. I pulled at a brass knob and the bell sounded strangely throughout the house; it seemed as if it were alone in the dwelling. I waited, but there was no answer; nobody opened the door. I rang again, and again I waited—nothing!

I became frightened! I ran to the next house, and twenty times I made the bell tinkle in the dark corridor, in which the concierge must be sleeping, but he did not awake; and I went on farther, pulling with all my might at all the bells, kicking at the doors and knocking with my cane and with my hands.

Suddenly I noticed that I was arriving at the Halles. They were deserted, without a sound, without a movement, without a wagon, a man, any vegetables or flowers—they were empty, motionless, deserted, dead!

A terrible fear seized me—it was horrible! What was happening? My God! what was happening? I went on again. But the time? The time? Who

could tell me what time it was? No clock was striking. I thought: "Let me open the front of my watch and feel the needle with my fingers." I drew my watch . . . it was no longer ticking . . . it had stopped! Nothing, not a sound throughout the city, not a light, nothing! Not even the distant rumbling of a cab!

I walked as far as the river-bank, and an icy coldness rose from the river. Was the Seine still running? I must find out. I found a stairway and went down. . . . I could not hear the current bubbling under the arches of my bridge . . . more steps . . . more sand . . . mud . . . then water. I dipped my arm into it; it was running cold, almost icy, almost exhausted, almost dead!

And I felt that I should never have the strength to go up again, and I should die there of hunger, exhaustion, and cold.



A WIDOW



HIS story was told during the hunting season at the Château Baneville. The autumn had been rainy and sad. The red leaves, instead of rustling under the feet, were rotting under the heavy downfalls.

The forest was as damp as it could be. From it came an odor of must, of rain, of soaked grass and wet earth; and the hunters, their backs hunched under the downpour, mournful dogs, with tails between their legs and hairs sticking to their sides, and the young women, with their clothes drenched, returned every evening, tired in body and in mind.

After dinner, in the large drawing-room, everybody played lotto, without pleasure, while the wind whistled madly around the house. Then they tried telling stories like those they read in books, but no one was able to invent anything amusing. The

hunters told tales of wonderful shots and of the butchery of rabbits; and the women racked their brains for ideas without revealing the imagination of Scheherezade. They were about to give up this diversion, when a young woman, who was idly caressing the hand of an old maiden aunt, noticed a little ring made of blond hair, which she had often seen without paying any attention to it.

She fingered it gently and asked: "Auntie, what is this ring? It looks as if it were made from the hair of a child."

The old lady blushed, grew pale, then answered in a trembling voice: "It is sad, so sad, that I never wish to speak of it. All the unhappiness of my life comes from that. I was very young then, and the memory has remained so painful that I weep every time I think of it."

Immediately everybody wished to know the story: but the old maid refused to tell it. Finally, after they had coaxed her for a long time, she yielded. Here is the story:

"You have often heard me speak of the Santèze family, now extinct. I knew the last three male members of this family. They all died in the same manner; this hair belongs to the last one. He was thirteen when he killed himself for me. That seems strange to you, doesn't it?

"Oh! it was a strange family—mad, if you will, but a charming madness, the madness of love. From father to son, all had violent passions which filled their whole being, which impelled them to do wild things, to fanatic devotion, even to crimes. This was born in them, just as burning devotion is in certain souls. Trappers have not the same nature as minions of the drawing-room. There was a say-

ing: 'As passionate as a Santèze.' This could be noticed by looking at them. They all had wavy hair, falling over their brows, curly beards, and large eyes whose glance pierced and moved one, though one could not say why.

"The grandfather of the owner of this hair, of whom it is the last souvenir, after many adventures, duels, and elopements, at about sixty-five fell madly in love with his farmer's daughter. I knew them both. She was blond, pale, distinguished-looking, with a slow manner of talking, a quiet voice, and a look so gentle that one might have taken her for a Madonna. The old nobleman took her to his house and was soon so captivated with her that he could not live along without her for a minute. His daughter and daughter-in-law, who lived in the castle, found this perfectly natural, love was such a tradition in the family. Nothing about a passion surprised them, and if one spoke before them of parted lovers, even of vengeance after treason, both said in the same sad tone: 'Oh, how he must have suffered to come to that point!' That was all. They grew sad over tragedies of love, but never grew indignant even when they were criminal.

"Now, one day a young man named Monsieur de Gradelle, who had been invited for the hunt, eloped with the young girl.

"Monsieur de Santèze remained calm as if nothing had happened; but one morning he was found hanging in the kennels, among the dogs.

"His son died in the same manner in a hotel in Paris during a journey which he made there in 1841, after being deceived by a singer from the Opéra.

"He left a twelve-year-old child and a widow,

my mother's sister. She came to my father's house with the boy, while we were living at Bertillon. I was then seventeen.

"You have no idea how wonderful and precocious this Santèze child was. One might have thought that all the tenderness and exaltation of the whole race had been stored up in this last one. He was always dreaming and walking about alone in a great alley of elms leading from the château to the forest. I watched from my window this sentimental boy, who was walking seriously, his hands behind his back, his head bent, and at times stopping to raise his eyes as if he could see and understand things that were not comprehensible at his age.

"Often, after dinner on clear evenings, he would say to me: 'Let us go outside and dream, cousin.' And we would go outside together in the park. He would stop quickly before a clearing where the white vapor of the moon lights the woods; and he would press my hand, saying: 'Look! look! but you don't understand me; I feel it. If you understood me, we should be happy. One must love to know!' I would laugh, and then kiss this child, who loved me madly.

"Often, after dinner, he would sit on my mother's knees. 'Come, auntie,' he would say, 'tell me some love-stories.' And my mother, as a joke, would tell him all the old legends of the family, all the passionate adventures of his forefathers; for thousands of them were told, some true and some false. It is their reputation for love and gallantry which has lost every one of these men; they gloried in it, and then thought that they had to live up to the renown of their house.

"The little fellow became exalted by these ten-

der or terrible stories, and at times he would clap his hands, crying: 'I, too, I, too, know how to love, better than all of them!'

"Then he began to court me in a timid and tender manner, at which every one laughed, it was so amusing. Every morning I had some flowers picked by him, and every evening before going to his room he would kiss my hand and murmur: 'I love you!'

"I was guilty, very guilty, and I grieved continually about it, and I have been doing penance all my life; I have remained an old maid—or, rather, I have lived as a widowed *fiancée*, his widow.

"I was amused at this childish tenderness, and I even encouraged him; I was coquettish, as charming as with a man, alternately caressing and severe. I maddened this child. It was a game for me, and a joyous diversion for his mother and mine. He was twelve! think of it! Who would have taken this atom's passion seriously? I kissed him as often as he wished; I even wrote him little notes, which were read by our respective mothers; and he answered me by passionate letters, which I have kept. Judging himself as a man, he thought that our loving intimacy was secret. We had forgotten that he was a *Santèze*.

"This lasted for about a year. One evening in the park he fell at my feet and, as he madly kissed the hem of my dress, he kept repeating: 'I love you! I love you! I love you! If ever you deceive me, if ever you leave me for another, I'll do as did my father.' And he added in a hoarse voice, which gave me a shiver: 'You know what he did!'

"I stood there astonished; he arose, and standing on the tips of his toes in order to reach my ear, for I was taller than he, he pronounced my first

name: 'Geneviève!' in such a gentle, sweet, tender tone that I trembled all over. I stammered: 'Let us return! let us return!' He said no more, and followed me; but as we were going up the steps of the porch, he stopped me, saying: 'You know, if ever you leave me, I'll kill myself.'

"This time I understood that I had gone too far, and I became quite reserved. One day, as he was reproaching me for this, I answered: 'You are now too old for jesting, and too young for serious love. I'll wait.'

"I thought that this would end the matter. In the autumn I was sent to a boarding-school. When he returned the following summer I was engaged to be married. He understood immediately, and for a week he became so pensive that I was quite anxious.

"On the morning of the ninth day I saw a little paper under my door as I got up. I seized it, opened it, and read: 'You have deserted me, and you know what I said. It is death to which you have condemned me. As I do not wish to be found by another than you, come to the park just where I told you last year that I loved you, and look in the air.'

"I thought that I should go mad. I dressed as quickly as I could and ran wildly to the place that he had mentioned. His little cap was on the ground, in the mud. It had been raining all night. I raised my eyes and saw something swinging among the leaves, for the wind was blowing a gale.

"I don't know what I did after that. I must have screamed at first, then fainted and fallen, and finally have run to the château. The next thing that I remember I was in bed, with my mother sitting beside me.

"I thought that I had dreamed all this in a

frightful nightmare. I stammered: 'And what about him, Gontran? . . .' There was no answer. It was true!

"I did not dare see him again; but I asked for a lock of his blond hair. Here . . . here it is!"

And the old maid stretched out her trembling hand in a despairing gesture. Then she blew her nose several times, wiped her eyes, and continued: "I broke off my marriage . . . without saying why. . . . And I . . . I have always remained . . . the . . . the widow of this thirteen-year-old boy." Then her head fell on her breast, and she wept for a long time.

As the guests were retiring for the night, a large man, whose quiet she had disturbed, whispered in his neighbor's ear: "Isn't it unfortunate to be so sentimental?"



OLD MONGILET*



N the office old Mongilet was considered a type. He was a good old employee who never had been outside of Paris but once in his life.

It was the end of July, and each of us every Sunday went to roll in the grass or soak in the water in the country nearby. Asnières, Argenteuil, Chatou, Bougival, the Maisons, Poissy had their *habitués* and their ardent admirers. We argued about the merits and advantages of all these places, celebrated and delightful to all Parisian employees.

Daddy Mongilet declared:

“ You are like a lot of sheep! It must be pretty, this country you talk of! ”

“ Well, how about you, Mongilet? Don't you ever go on an excursion? ”

“ Yes, indeed. I go in an omnibus. When I have had a good breakfast, without any hurry, at

*This story was later incorporated in *The Sundays of a Parisian*.

the wineshop down there, I look up my route with a plan of Paris and the time-table of the lines and connections. And then I climb up on the box, open my umbrella, and off we go. Oh, I see lots of things, more than you, I bet! I change my surroundings. It is as if I were taking a journey across the world, the people are so different in one street and another. I know my Paris better than any one. And then, there is nothing more amusing than the vestibules. You would not believe what one sees in these at a glance. One guesses at domestic scenes simply at sight of the face of a man who is roaring; one is amused on passing by a barber's shop to see the barber leave his customer, whose face is covered with lather, to look out in the street. One exchanges heartfelt glances with the millions just for fun, as one has no time to alight. Ah, how many things one sees!

"It is the theater, the real, the true, the theater of nature, seen as the horses trot by. Heavens! I would not give my excursions in the omnibus for all your stupid excursions in the woods."

"Come and try it, Mongilet; come to the country once, just to see."

"I was there once," he replied, "twenty years ago, and you never will catch me there again."

"Tell us about it, Mongilet."

"If you wish to hear it. This is how it was: You knew Boivin, the old editorial clerk whom we called Boileau?"

"Yes, perfectly."

"He was my office chum. The rascal had a house at Colombes and always invited me to spend Sunday with him. He would say:

"'Come along, Maculotte' (he called me Macu-

lotte for fun). 'You will see what a nice excursion we will take.'

"I let myself be entrapped like an animal, and set out one morning by the eight-o'clock train. I arrived at a kind of town, a country town where there is nothing to see, and I at length found my way to an old wooden door with an iron bell at the end of an alley between two walls.

"I rang, and waited a long time, and at last the door was opened. What was it that opened it? I could not tell at the first glance. A woman or an ape? The creature was old, ugly, and wicked-looking; it was covered with old clothes that looked dirty. It had chicken feathers in its hair and looked as if it would devour me.

" 'What do you want?' she said.

" 'Monsieur Boivin.'

" 'What do you want of him, of Monsieur Boivin?'

"I felt ill at ease on being questioned by this fury. I stammered: 'Why—he expects me.'

" 'Ah! it is you who have come to luncheon?'

" 'Yes,' I stammered, trembling.

"Then, turning toward the house, she cried in an angry tone:

" 'Boivin, here is your man!'

"It was my friend's wife! Little Boivin appeared immediately on the threshold of a sort of barrack of plaster covered with zinc, that looked like a foot-stove. He wore white duck trousers, covered with stains, and a soiled panama hat.

"After shaking my hands warmly, he took me into what he called his garden. It was at the end of another alley-way, inclosed by high walls, and was a little square the size of a handkerchief, sur-

rounded by houses that were so high that the sun could reach it only two or three hours in the day. Pansies, pinks, wallflowers, and a few rose-bushes were languishing in this airless well, which was as hot as an oven from the refraction of heat from the roofs.

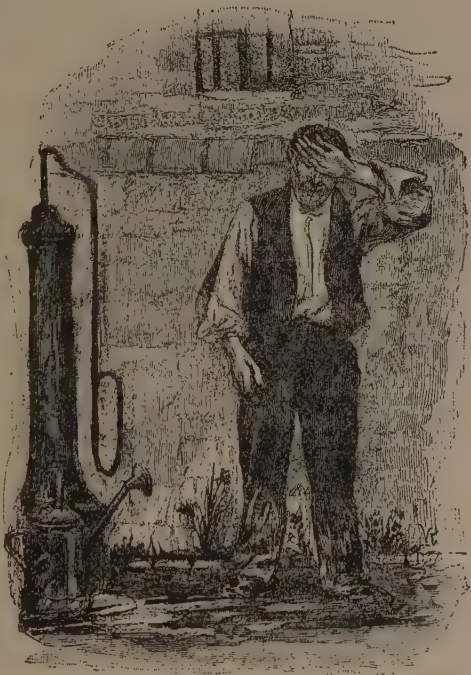
“ ‘I have no trees,’ said Boivin, ‘but the neighbors’ walls take their place. I have as much shade as in a wood.’

“ Then he took hold of a button of my coat and said in a low tone:

“ ‘You can do me a service. You saw the wife. She is not agreeable, eh? To-day, as I had invited you, she gave me clean clothes; but if I spot them all is lost.

I counted on you to water my plants.’

“ I agreed. I took off my coat, rolled up my sleeves, and began to work the handle of a kind of pump that whistled, puffed, and rattled like a consumptive as it emitted a thread of water like a Wallace drinking-fountain. It took me ten minutes to



water it, and I was in a bath of perspiration. Boivin directed me: 'Here—this plant—a little more; enough—now this one.'

"The watering-pot leaked, and my feet got more water than the flowers. The bottoms of my trousers were soaking and covered with mud. And twenty times running I kept it up, soaking my feet afresh each time and perspiring anew as I worked the handle of the pump. When I was tired out and wanted to stop, Boivin in a tone of entreaty said, as he put his hand on my arm: 'Just one more watering-pot full—just one, and that will be all.'

"To reward me he gave me a rose, a big rose; but hardly had it touched my buttonhole than it fell to pieces, leaving only a hard little green knob as a decoration. I was surprised, but said nothing.

"Madame Boivin's voice was heard in the distance: 'Are you ever coming? When you know that luncheon is ready!'

"We went toward the foot-stove. If the garden was in the shade, the house, on the other hand, was in the blazing sun, and the sweating room in the Turkish bath is not as hot as was my friend's dining-room.

"Three plates, at the side of which were some half-washed forks, were placed on a table of yellow wood, in the middle of which stood an earthen pip-pin containing boiled beef and potatoes. We began to eat.

"A large water-bottle full of water slightly colored with wine attracted my attention. Boivin, embarrassed, said to his wife:

" 'See here, my dear, just on a special occasion, are you not going to give us some plain wine? '

"She looked at him furiously.

“ ‘ So that you may both get tipsy, is that it, and stay here gabbing all day? Thanks for the special occasion! ’

“ He said no more. After the stew she brought in another dish of potatoes cooked with bacon. When this dish was finished, still in silence, she announced:

“ ‘ That is all. Now get out. ’

“ Boivin looked at her in astonishment.

“ ‘ But the pigeon—the pigeon you plucked this morning? ’

“ She put her hands on her hips:

“ ‘ Perhaps you have not had enough? Because you bring people here is no reason why we should devour all that there is in the house. What is there for me to eat, this evening? ’

“ We rose. Boivin whispered:

“ ‘ Wait for me a second, and we will skip. ’

“ He went into the kitchen where his wife had gone and I overheard him say:

“ ‘ Give me twenty sous, my dear. ’

“ ‘ What do you want with twenty sous? ’

“ ‘ Why, one does not know what may happen. It is always better to have some money. ’

“ She yelled, so that I should hear:

“ ‘ No, I will not give it to you! As this man has had luncheon here, the least he can do is to pay your expenses for the day. ’

“ Boivin came back to fetch me. As I wished to be polite, I bowed to the mistress of the house, stammering:

“ ‘ Madame—many thanks—kind welcome! ’

“ ‘ That’s all right,’ she replied. ‘ But do not bring him back drunk, for you will have to answer to me, you know! ’

“ We set out. We had to cross a perfectly bare plain under the burning sun. I attempted to gather a flower along the road and gave a cry of pain. It had hurt my hand frightfully. They call those plants nettles. And everywhere there was a smell of manure enough to turn your stomach.

“ Boivin said: ‘ Have a little patience, and we will reach the river bank.’

“ We reached the river. Here there was an odor of mud and dirty water, and the sun blazed down on the water so that it burned my eyes. I begged Boivin to go under cover somewhere. He took me into a kind of shanty filled with men, a river boatmen’s tavern.

“ He said: ‘ This does not look very grand, but it is very comfortable.’

“ I was hungry. I ordered an omelet. But, lo and behold! at the second glass of wine that beggar, Boivin, lost his head, and I understood why his wife gave him his wine diluted.

“ He got up, declaimed, wanted to show his strength, interfered in a quarrel between two drunken men who were fighting, and but for the landlord who came to the rescue we should both have been killed.

“ I dragged him away, holding him up until we reached the first *buisson*, where I deposited him. I lay down beside him and, it seems, I fell asleep. We must certainly have slept a long time, for it was dark when I awoke. Boivin was snoring at my side. I shook him. He rose, but he was still drunk, though a little less so.

“ We set out through the darkness across the plain. Boivin said he knew the way. He made me turn to the left, then to the right, then to the left.

We could see neither sky nor earth, and found ourselves lost in the midst of a kind of forest of wooden stakes that came as high as our noses. It was a vineyard and these were the supports. There was not a single light on the horizon. We wandered about in this vineyard for about an hour or two, hesitating, reaching out our arms, without finding any limit, for we kept retracing our steps.

“ At length Boivin fell against a stake that tore his cheek, and remained in a sitting posture on the ground, uttering with all his might a long and resounding ‘ Hallo ! ’ while I screamed ‘ Help ! help ! ’ as loud as I could, lighting matches to show the way to our rescuers and also to keep up my courage.

“ At last a belated peasant heard us and put us on our right road. I took Boivin to his home. But as I was leaving him on the threshold of his garden, the door opened suddenly and his wife appeared, a candle in her hand. She frightened me horribly.

“ As soon as she saw her husband, for whom she must have been waiting since dark, she screamed, as she darted toward me :

“ ‘ Ah, scoundrel ! I knew you would bring him back drunk ! ’

“ I made my escape quickly, running all the way to the station, and as I thought the fury was pursuing me I shut myself in an inner room, as the train was not due for half an hour.

“ That is why I never married and why I never go out of Paris.”



THE GREAT SWORD



HE blue sky, across which light clouds floated, reminded one of the waters of a lake on which swans were slowly sailing. The air was warm and saturated with the delicate fragrance of the mimosa, and Madame de Viellermont ordered coffee to be served on the terrace overlooking the sea.

An almost indescribable feeling of pleasure was awakened as one watched the sails, which were gradually disappearing in the mysterious distance, and the almost motionless sea, which had the sheen of jewels, and attracted the eyes like the dreamy looks of a woman.

Monsieur de Pardeillac, who had arrived from Paris, fresh from the remembrance of the last election there, from that carnival of variegated posters which for weeks had imparted the strange aspect of some Oriental bazaar to the whole city, had just

been relating the triumph of the General, and went on to say that those who had thought that the game was lost were beginning to hope again.

After listening to him, old Comte de Lancolme, who had spent his whole life in rummaging libraries, and who had certainly compiled more manuscripts than any Benedictine friar, shook his bald head, and exclaimed in his shrill, rather mocking voice:

“ Will you allow me to tell you a very old story, which came into my mind while you were speaking, my dear friend, and which I read formerly about an old Italian city, though I forget at this moment where it was?

“ It happened in the fifteenth century, far removed from our epoch, but you shall judge whether it might not have happened yesterday.

“ Since the day when, mad with rage and revolt, the town had set fire to the ducal palace and had ignominiously expelled the patrician who had been their *podestà*, as though he had been some vicious scoundrel; had thrust his lovely daughter into a convent, and forced his sons, who might have claimed their parental heritage and have again imposed the abhorred yoke upon them, into a monastery, the town had never known any prosperity. One after another the shops closed, and money became as scarce as if there had been an invasion of barbarian hordes, who had emptied the State treasury and stolen the last gold coin.

“ The poor people were in abject misery, and in vain held out their hands to passers-by in the church porches and in the squares, and only the watchman disturbed the silence of the starlit nights by his monotonous and melancholy call, which announced the flight of the passing hours.

“ There were no more serenades; no longer did viols and flutes trouble the slumbers of the lovers’ chosen ones; no longer were amorous arms thrown round women’s supple waists, nor were bottles of red wine put to cool in the fountains under the trees. There were no more love adventures, to the rhythm of laughter and of kisses; nothing but heavy, monotonous weariness, and the anxiety as to what the next day might bring forth, and ceaseless, unbridled ambition and desire.

“ The palaces were deserted, one by one, as if the plague were raging; and the nobility had fled to Florence and Rome. At first the common people, artisans and shopkeepers, had installed themselves in power, as in a conquered city, and had seized posts of honor and paying offices and had sacked the treasury with their greedy and eager hands. After them followed the middle classes; and those solemn upstarts and hypocrites, like leather bottles inflated with wind, acting the tyrant and lying without the least shame, disowned their former promises, and would soon have given the finishing stroke to the unfortunate city, which was already at its last resources.

“ Discontent was increasing, and the police could scarcely find time to tear down from the walls the seditious placards which had been posted up by unknown hands.

“ But now that the old *podestà* had died in exile, worn out with grief, and that his children, who had been brought up under monastic rule, were accustomed to nothing but praying, and thought only of their own salvation, no one could take his place.

“ And so these would-be princelings profited by the occasion to strut about at their ease like great

nobles, to cram themselves with luxurious meals, to increase their property by degrees, to put everything up for sale, and to get rid of those who, later on, could have called for an accounting and have nailed them to the pillory by the ears.

“ Their arrogance knew no bounds, and when they were questioned about their acts, they only replied by menaces or raillery. This state of affairs lasted for twenty years, when, as war was imminent with Lucca, the Council raised troops and enlisted mercenaries. Several battles were fought in which the enemy were beaten and were obliged to flee, abandoning their colors, their arms, prisoners, and all the booty in their camp.

“ The man who had led the soldiers into battle, whom they had acclaimed as a triumphant and laurel-crowned Cæsar around their campfires, was a poor *condottiere*, who possessed nothing in the world except his clothes, his buff jerkin, and his heavy sword.

“ They called him Hercules, on account of his powerful muscles, his massive build, and his large head; and also Malavista, because in those butcheries he had no pity, no weakness, but seemed, with his great murderous arms, as if he had the long reach of death itself. He had neither title deeds, fortune, nor relatives, for he had been born one night in the tent of a female camp follower; for a long time, an old broken drum had been his cradle, and he had grown up anyhow, without knowing those maternal kisses and endearments that warm the heart. He did not know the pleasure of not always sleeping on a hard bed, or always eating tough beef, or being obliged to tighten his sword belt when luck turned like a weathercock when the

wind shifts, and a man would gladly give all his share of the next booty for a moldy crust of bread and a glass of water at the present moment.

“ He was a simple and brave man, whose heart was as virgin as some shore on which no human foot has ever yet left its imprint.

“ The chiefs of the Council were imprudent enough to summon Hercules Malavista within the walls of the town, and to celebrate his arrival with almost imperial pomp, more, however, to deceive the people and to regain their waning popularity by means of some one else, by a ceremony copied from those of pagan Rome, than to honor and recompense the services of a soldier whom they despised at the bottom of their hearts.

“ The bells pealed out, and the archbishop and clergy and choir boys went in procession to meet the Captain, singing psalms and hymns of joy, as if it were Easter. The streets and squares were strewn with sprays of box, roses and marjoram, while the poorest homes were decorated with flags, and hung with rich drapery.

“ The conqueror entered through Trajan’s gate, with the symbolical laurel wreath of gold on his head; and as he bestrode his horse, that was as black as a starless night, he appeared even taller, more massive, and more virile than he really was. He had a joyous and tranquil smile on his lips, and a hidden fire was burning in his eyes. His soldiers bore the flags and the trophies that he had gained before him, while the crowd that followed shouted loud *vivas* in his honor.

“ In this way he traversed all the quarters of the town, and even the suburbs. The women blew kisses to him, and held up their children so that

they might see him and he might touch them, and the men cheered him, and looked at him with emotion as they reflected and dreamed about that brilliant, unknown man, who appeared to be surrounded by a halo of glory.

“The members of the Council began to perceive the extent of the almost irreparable error that they had committed, and did not know what to do in order to ward off the danger by which they were menaced, and to rid themselves of a guest who was quite ready to become their master. They saw clearly that their hours were numbered, that the climax was at hand, when the leaders would be carried away in the uprising, like straws in a swift stream.

“Hercules could not show himself in public without being received with shouts of welcome and noisy demonstrations. Deputations from the nobility, as well as from the people, told him that he had only to make a sign and to say a word, and his name would be in every mouth, and he would be elected ruler. They begged him on their knees to accept the supreme authority, as though he would be conferring a favor on them. But the free lance did not seem to understand them, and repelled their offers with the superb indifference of a soldier, who has nothing to do with the populace or with a crown.

“At length, however, he felt the intoxication of power, and grew accustomed to the idea of ruling the lives of thousands, of having a palace, arsenals, chests of gold, ships which he could send on adventurous cruises wherever he pleased, and of governing that city, with all its houses and all its churches, and of being prominent at all grand functions in the cathedral.

“The merchants and tradespeople dreaded the

shadow of that great sword, which might sweep them all away and upset their false weights and scales. They assembled secretly in a Carmelite monastery outside the gates of the city, and a short time afterward the weaver Marconelli and the money-changer Rippone brought Gioconda, one of the most beautiful courtesans in Venice, who knew every secret in the art of love, and whose kisses were a foretaste of Paradise, back with them from that city. She soon succeeded in entangling the rough soldier in her toils, and Hercules lost his head and forgot his ambitions and his oaths.

“ Why lose precious hours in conspiring, in deluding himself with chimeras? Why risk his life when he loved and was loved, and when the minutes were all too short that he could spend with her?

“ And so he obeyed Gioconda's commands. They left the city, escaping the vigilance of the palace sentries, and never halted until they reached a small, quiet fishing village, with gardens full of lemon trees, where the deserted beach was yellow as gold and the sea lost itself in the distance.

“ And while the Captain and his paramour forgot the world in the charm of each other's society, in that beautiful spot, the indignant citizens who had previously clamored for him now tore up the paving stones to stone the man who had betrayed their trust. His statue was torn down and his memory reviled and the members of the Council breathed freely once more, as they no longer feared ‘ the great sword.’ ”



YVETTE

CHAPTER I

A DOVE OR A HAWK?



As they were going out of the Café Riche, Jean de Servigny said to Léon Saval:

“ If you’re willing, we shall walk. The weather is too beautiful to take a cab.”

And his friend answered:

“ All right, I am willing.”

Jean went on:

“ It is not quite eleven; we shall arrive there long before twelve, so let us go slowly.”

A lively throng was swarming on the boulevard, that summer-night crowd, full of the joy of living, that moves, drinks, murmurs, and flows like a river.

Every few steps a café shed its light upon the mass of diners, whose tables, covered with bottles and glasses, were in the way of passing strollers. In the streets cabs with red, green, or blue eyes shot by in the projected light, showing, for a second, the silhouette of a trotting, lanky horse, the elevated profile of the coachman, and the somber-hued body of the carriage. Those of the Urbaine

Company, with their yellow panels, were an exception to the rest, when struck by this light.

The two friends walked slowly, enjoying their cigars, in full dress, their overcoats thrown on their arms, flowers in their buttonholes, and hats tilted to the side, as they are often worn by one after a good dinner and when the breeze is slightly warm.

They were bound to one another by a strong, solid friendship that dated back to their schooldays.

Jean de Servigny, short and thin, slightly bald, somewhat frail, very elegant, with curled mustache, light eyes, delicate lips, was one of those night owls who seem to have been born and brought up on the boulevard; indefatigable and full of vigor, in spite of an eternally attenuated appearance. He was one of those many Parisians in whom the gymnasium, fencing, showers, and vapor baths create a fictitious nervous force. He was as well known for his fast life as he was on account of his wit, position in society, sociability, and amiability that seem to be peculiar to certain men.

A true Parisian, light-hearted, skeptical, changing, energetic, and irresolute, capable of everything and nothing, egotistical by principle, generous by fits. He ate into his income and amused himself with moderation. Indifferent yet passionate, he was always on the verge of giving into or resisting his whims or contrary instincts, all of which he ended by obeying; in this he followed the reasoning of the men of his type, whose windmill logic consisted in going with the wind and profiting by circumstances whose birth is, above all, not due to any great trouble or expense on their part.

His friend, Léon Saval, equally wealthy, was one of those superb giants who cause women to glance

back despite themselves. He gave the impression of a monument turned into man, a type of which models are made and sent to exposition. Too large, too handsome, too tall, too stout, his fault seemed to be that very excess of advantageous qualities. He had been the hero of many a love affair.

When they arrived in front of the Vaudeville, he asked:

“ Did you warn this lady you would introduce me? ”

Servigny laughed.

“ Warn the Marquise Obardi! Do you send word to the coachman on the corner that you are going to take his cab? ”

Saval, somewhat perplexed, inquired:

“ What is this person, anyway? ”

“ She is nothing but a common, ordinary *parvenue*, a charming thing, originating no one knows where, who appeared one day, no one knows how, in the world of adventurers, and who is equal to the most cunning of that set. But that is neither here nor there. They say that her real name, her maiden name, is Octavie Bardin, from which she derived Obardi, by preserving the first letter of her Christian name and suppressing the last of her family name.

“ She is, on the whole, an amiable woman, of whom you will not fail to become the lover, on account of your fine physique. For when Hercules is introduced to Messaline, something is bound to happen. Though I must add that even if the admission to this house is free, one is never under obligation to buy whatever is displayed there. Love and cards are the goods handled, but you are not absolutely expected to patronize either. The exit is also free.

“ She took a house in the neighborhood of the Etoile about three years ago, and threw open her salon to that scum of the continents that comes to Paris to make use of various dangerous and criminal talents.

“ How did I come to drop into such a set? I do not remember any more. I went there, as we all go into such places, to gamble and to meet the women who are none too prudish and the men none too honest. I rather like that world of filibusters, with their multifarious decorations, all foreigners, all noblemen, all titled, all unknown to their embassies, except to the spies. All speak of their honor without the least instigation, brag of their ancestors, tell the story of their life every five minutes; each and every one of them is a liar, a swindler, as dangerous as his cards, as deceiving as their names, brave by necessity, for the same reason as the assassin who cannot rob his victims without risking his own life. They are the alumni of the prisons.

“ I confess to a certain sympathy and secret admiration for them. They are interesting to study, to know—above all, amusing to listen to; always witty, never insipid, like the government employee. Their wives are always pretty, with a slight smack of foreign rascality and the mystery of their past life, half of which has probably been spent in some penitentiary. As a rule, they have beautiful eyes, gorgeous hair; in fact, they seem to have been especially created for that life. They possess that seductive grace which bewilders and dazzles their victims, over whom they exercise an unwholesome, irresistible charm.

“ The Marquise Obardi is a true type of these

elegant sirens. Ripe, but still beautiful, bewitching, and crafty, she gives the impression of being vicious to the very marrow of her bones. One certainly enjoys a fast life in that house—gambling, dancing, midnight suppers, all the usual rounds of the gay life reign supreme.”

Léon Saval asked: “Have you been or are you her lover?”

Servigny answered: “I have never been and will never be her lover. I frequent this place on account of her daughter.”

“She has a daughter?”

“A beauty. She is to-day the principal attraction of this cavern. Tall, magnificent, just right, eighteen summers, as blonde as her mother is dark, always lively, ready for fun, laughing and dancing with abandonment. Who is or who has been the lucky dog? That is still an open question. Ten are in line, and await patiently the day of judgment. A girl like that in the hands of a woman like the Marquise is a fortune, and she is playing a mighty good and tight game. I do not know exactly where I stand. Are they waiting for a better chance than I? Still, I am going to lie low and jump at the first opportunity.

“That girl Yvette is certainly a puzzle to me. She disconcerts me entirely. She is a mystery. If she is not a monster of perversity and keenness, she is the most marvelous phenomenon of innocence that I ever saw. She lives in such an infamous world with a quiet and tranquil ease that is either terribly criminal or frightfully naïve.

“She is the marvelous offspring of an adventuress, sprouted from the filth of that class, just like the most beautiful of roses, or else the daughter

of some gentleman of high lineage, some celebrated artist, or some great nobleman, some prince, or, perhaps, some king, who was the mother's passing fancy. No one knows what she is."

Saval began to laugh:

"You are in love."

"No. I am in the ranks, and there is a world of difference. I shall introduce you to my co-pretenders. Though I might say here that I am in the lead. I seem to be shown special favors."

Saval repeated:

"You are really in love."

"No. She troubles, seduces, worries, attracts, and even scares me away. I am afraid of her as of a trap, and still I have the greatest longing for her, just as a thirsty man has for some beverage to quench his thirst. I am charmed by her, and still I only approach her with the apprehension that one would a man suspected of being a clever thief. When near her I experience an irresistible sympathy toward her for her possible candor and a very natural suspicion against her no less probable cunning. I feel that she is an extraordinary creature, either exquisite or detestable. I cannot say yet."

Saval insisted:

"You are in love, I say, and speak with quite a little poetic grace, really you do. Question yourself closely, and you will acknowledge it."

Servigny mused for a while:

"It may be true, after all. At all events, she is always uppermost in my mind. Yes, I do think too much about her. I see her as I doze off to sleep, and then again when I awaken. Yes, I realize that. Her image is ever with me. Is this physical obsession what they call love? Her face is so imprinted

in my mind that I can at any time see it by closing my eyes, and my heart beats at such moments. But I love her in a queer manner. My strongest desire is to possess her, and yet the idea of marrying her would seem to be a folly, a stupidity, a monstrosity, even to me. I am afraid of her just as the bird is of the falcon coming down upon it. And I am jealous of her and everything that remains unknown to me in that incomprehensible heart. I am forever asking myself: 'Is she a charming child or an abominable deceiver?' She says things that would make a trooper blush, but so do parrots. She is exciting and encouraging, with the air of a true courtesan, and yet she remains as distant as the purest maiden. While seemingly in love with me, she is continually poking fun at me; to the outside world she acts as if she were my lover, and, in intimacy, she treats me worse than she would her brother or valet.

"There are times when I honestly believe she has as many lovers as her mother. Then, again, I cannot help thinking she knows nothing of life, nothing whatever.

"She is a great reader of novels, most of which I have the honor of furnishing, wherefore she calls me her librarian. She reads them as fast as they are printed.

"The result in the make-up of her mind must surely be a strange salad.

"That heterogeneous mixture must be one of the many causes of her strange peculiarities. When one tries to take a view of life through fifteen thousand novels, one doubtless sees it in a queer light.

"One thing remains certain, I never loved a person as I do her.

“ But I will never marry her.

“ If she has already had lovers, I shall merely increase the number. If not, why, then, I shall be number one.

“ It is clear she will never marry any one. Who would marry the daughter of the Marquise Obardi, alias Octavie Bardin? No one, and there are a thousand reasons.

“ Where could she find a candidate? In society? Never. Her mother's social position is too well known, as well as the house of which the daughter is the main attraction.

“ In the middle class? Still less. Besides, the Marquise would not make such a poor speculation; she will never give up Yvette definitely except to a man of the higher class, whom she will never find.

“ A man of the lower classes is altogether out of the question. Yvette strictly belongs to no class and can really enter through marriage none of those I named.

“ She belongs by birth, education, heredity, manner of life, to the gay grisettes of Paris.

“ She cannot escape, unless she enters a sisterhood, which is not probable. Her profession, and her only one, then, is: ‘ Love.’ She will come to it, if she has not already. That is her destiny, and that is what I am waiting for.

“ Many others are, too. You will see a Frenchman, Monsieur de Belvigne; a Russian, the Prince Kravalow, and an Italian, the Chevalier Valreali, all of whom are candidates; there are others, but they do not count.

“ The Marquise is biding her time. She knows that I have money, and that is why I think she is casting her eye on me.

"Her salon is the most striking of the kind. You will meet some men just as respectable as we are. She seems to have sorted the prettiest of the women of her class, which apparently stands all by itself. Her master idea was to choose adventuresses who have children, girls especially, so that any fool or ignorant victim would surely take these persons to be honest women."

They had reached the Avenue des Champs-Élysées by this time. A slight breeze rocked the leaves of the trees, and softly brushed the faces of the strollers. Silent shadows moved under the trees; while others, seated on the benches, looked like dark spots. And these shadows spoke very low, as if confiding some important or shameful secrets.

Servigny continued, after a pause:

"You have no idea of the fantastic titles that you will hear in this haunt.

"By the way, I must introduce you as Comte Saval: 'Saval' all by itself would make a bad impression."

But his friend protested:

"No, sir. I shall not submit to the ridicule of borrowing a title, not even among those people. No, sir, not for the world."

Servigny began to laugh:

"You are stupid. They baptized me Duc de Servigny. I cannot say how it happened, though. But the fact remains that I am the Duc de Sérigny; and I neither protest nor complain. It makes no difference to me. While, were it not for this title I should be terribly despised."

Saval remained unconvinced.

"It may be all right for you, because you are

a nobleman, anyway. But with me it is totally different. I am a commoner and must accept my lot, for better or for worse. That will be my mark of distinction and my superiority."

Servigny, nevertheless, insisted:

"But that's impossible, old man, altogether too much so. It would appear almost monstrous. You would be made to feel like a ragpicker in a reunion of emperors. Leave it to me and I shall introduce you as the Viceroy of the Upper Mississippi, and no one will say anything."

"It is of no use. I refuse to submit to it."

"All right. And, really, I am stupid to argue with you. I defy you to enter this house unless there is a title given to you, just as ladies are handed bouquets in certain department stores."

They turned to their right into the Rue de Berri, went to the first floor of a beautiful modern house, and left their overcoats and canes in the hands of four servants in knee-breeches. An odor of flowers, perfumes, and women impregnated the air; one heard the confused, continuous murmur that told of crowded rooms near by.

A sort of master of ceremonies, tall, erect, of a stately, stoutness, with white mutton-chops, approached the newcomer and asked him, after a short, proud bow:

"Whom should I announce?"

Servigny answered:

"Monsieur Saval."

Then the man, opening the door, shouted into the crowd of guests, in sonorous tones:

"The Duc de Servigny!"

"The Baron Saval!"

The first parlor was filled with women. One's

first gaze fell upon naked breasts, set in clothes and silks of the most glaring colors.

The hostess, standing up, talking to a few friends, turned around immediately, and went to greet her new guests, with a certain grace in her walk and smile on her lips.

Her narrow forehead, very low, was covered with a mass of black ebony hair, tightly drawn over her head, hiding both her temples.

She was tall and inclined to be stout, a little too much so, on the other side of thirty, but still maintaining the freshness of youth, and possessing a warm, magnetic beauty. Two enormous black eyes shone under this helmet of hair that made one looking at her both smile and dream and wish to secure her for his very own. Her nose was rather thin and mouth a trifle large, but infinitely seducing—made to command and conquer.

Her voice was her greatest personal charm. It rippled from out of her mouth, so natural, so clear, so harmonious, that one experienced a physical joy to listen to it. It was a pleasure for the ear to hear the words escape. It made one think of running water in a brook, and it was a treat to the eye to see those lips, a little too red, part to let the words escape.

She held out her hand to Servigny, who kissed it, and, as she let her fan drop the full length of the golden chain to which it was tied, gave the other to Saval:

“You are welcome, as are all the friends of the Duke.”

Then she threw a rapid glance at the superb giant just introduced to her. She had on the upper lip a slight suspicion of a mustache, that darkened

as she spoke. She exhaled a delicious odor, some perfume from America or India.

Others were now arriving, all marquises, counts, or princes.

Then she said to Servigny, with true motherly grace:

“ You will find my daughter in the other room. Enjoy yourselves, gentlemen, and be at home.”

And she left them to greet other guests, not without having first thrown Saval one of those looks that women grace some fortunate ones with, when the latter have had the good luck to strike their fancy. Servigny took his friend by the arm:

“ I am going to pilot you. The parlor, in which you now are, is the Temple of Worldly Pleasures. Second-hand objects, as good as new, even better, rated at a high price, and obtainable by lease only. To your left, the Temple of Money. Down the other end will be found the sanctuary, the market of the young girls. There the products of the worthy friends of the Marquise are displayed. In this case a legitimate union might be consented to. This is the future, the fond hope . . . of our nights. This department is also the most interesting in the museum of moral diseases; these youngsters, whose souls are early dislocated, as it were, just as the joints of circus children are. Come and watch them.”

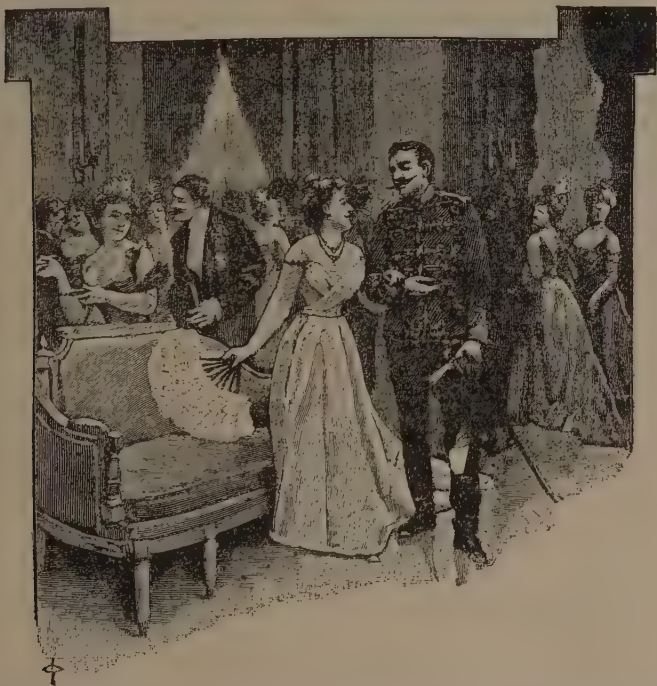
An orchestra was playing a waltz; they stopped at the entrance of the ballroom and surveyed the assembly. About fifteen couples were turning around; the men were serious, and their dancers kept a fixed smile upon their lips; like their mothers', their gowns were cut low.

Suddenly a tall young miss dashed away from

the other side of the room, interrupting the couples that were in her way, and, approaching the two friends, cried:

“ Ah! there is Muscade! Hello, Muscade! ”

She looked supremely happy; her features seemed to be illuminated with the joy of living. Her



white skin, that gilded skin of the auburn-haired girl, shone brightly. She possessed a mass of flaming red hair that she wore curled over her head, which was supported by a flexible neck that was still too thin.

She seemed to have been made to move just as her mother was to speak, so natural, noble, simple

were all her gestures and motions. One could not help feeling a moral joy and physical happiness to see her walk, move, incline her head, lift her arms, even.

She repeated:

“ Ah, Muscade! Hello, Muscade! ”

Servigny shook her hand violently, as he would have a man's, and said:

“ Mam'zelle Yvette, my friend the Baron Saval.”

She bowed to the stranger:

“ Pleased to meet you, sir. Are you always as tall as that? ”

Servigny answered in that sprightly, half-sarcastic tone which he always affected with her, to hide his suspicions and doubts.

“ No, indeed, mam'zelle. He put on his biggest dimensions to please your mother, who likes large masses.”

The young girl then answered in a serio-comic manner:

“ All right. But when you come to see me you will please diminish a little. I do not like extremes. See, Muscade is just right! ”

Turning toward Servigny, she asked:

“ Do you know how to dance, Muscade? Just one dance.”

Without answering, he quickly took her by the waist; they both disappeared in a furious whirl.

They danced faster than the others, turned and turned, glided over the floor, madly pivoting, seemingly one person, so closely were they bound together. To see their erect bodies, motionless and stiff limbs, one would have thought they were being operated by an invisible mechanism.

Evidently they were tireless. The other couples soon abandoned hope of keeping pace, and let this mad couple have the whole floor to themselves. They were then alone, but still kept on waltzing indefinitely. They seemed to have forgotten where they were, what they were doing, and to have gone away far from the ball, into some ecstasy. The musicians alone followed the two madcaps, and kept on playing for them. All eyes were fixed upon Servigny and Yvette, and when they stopped at last, every one applauded.

She was all flushed now, her eyes had a strange look, ardent and timid, not so bold as a little while ago, but much softer; the darkened pupils in her extremely light-blue eyes did not appear natural.

Servigny was somewhat dazed. He had to lean against a door to regain composure.

She said to him:

“Poor thing, you are dizzy. I won that time.”

He laughed nervously and gave her an intimate, searching look.

She then said:

“At times you remind me of a cat, when it is angry and is going to spring at you. Come, let us go find your friend.”

Without answering her, he took her arm and they crossed the main parlor.

Saval was not alone. The Marquise Obardi was with him. She was carrying on a meaningless conversation, in that bewitching voice which turned many a one's head. But her look, that sought to penetrate into his innermost thoughts, seemed to convey an entirely different meaning to what came from her mouth. Upon perceiving Servigny, her expression changed, and she said, smiling:

“ I have just rented a cottage to spend two months at Bougival. I hope you will come to see us, with your friend. I shall be there Monday. Why don't you both come to dine Saturday and stay over Sunday? ”

Servigny looked at Yvette. She smiled in her usual tranquil, serene manner, and said:

“ Of course, Muscade will come Saturday. That goes without saying. We shall do a lot of crazy things, we shall have a great time.”

For a moment Servigny thought that she put some meaning in her last words.

The Marquise then turned her large black eyes upon Saval, and asked:

“ You will come, too, Baron? ”

Her smile, at least, left no room for doubt as to what she meant. He bowed:

“ I shall be only too glad to come.”

Yvette murmured, with a malice that was either perfidious or naïve:

“ We shall shock everybody, shall we not, Muscade? And we shall tantalize my regiment.”

And she designated a group of men, all of whom remained at a distance with eyes fixed upon her.

Servigny answered:

“ Just as you say, Mam'zelle.”

When he spoke to her he never pronounced the “ mademoiselle ”; that was his privilege, a sign of familiarity.

Saval inquired:

“ Why do you, Mademoiselle Yvette, call Servigny ‘ Muscade ’ ? ”

She answered candidly:

“ Because he always slips out of your hand.

You always think you have a good hold on him, and yet he gets away."

The Marquise spoke in an absent-minded and languorous manner; she was evidently absorbed in some other thought, while her eyes were bent on Saval.

"These children are so funny!"

Yvette did not relish this remark.

"I am not funny; I am just frank, that is all. I like Muscade, and he always escapes me; that makes me angry."

Servigny made a deep bow:

"I am never going to leave you, neither day nor night."

She exclaimed, with terror:

"No, indeed! In the daytime I do not mind, but at night-time you would be in the way."

He asked with cold-blooded impertinence:

"Why?"

She replied, with amazing and tranquil audacity:

"Because I imagine that you look at your best when dressed?"

The Marquise, without a trace of emotion or surprise:

"You two surely do not pay attention to what you say. You cannot be innocent to such a degree."

Servigny added ironically:

"That is my opinion."

Yvette stared at him, and, evidently hurt, said haughtily:

"You are impudently impolite, altogether too much so since a few days."

Turning around, she called:

"Chevalier, come to my rescue. I am being insulted."

A thin, dark-haired gentleman approached.

"Who is the guilty one?" said he, smiling, with a sort of constrained air.

She nodded toward Servigny:

"It is he; but I like him better than any one of you, because he's less of a bore."

The Chevalier Valreali bowed:

"We do our best. We have perhaps less advantages, but surely not less devotion."

A tall, stout gentleman, with gray mutton-chops and stentorian voice, was coming up to them:

"Mademoiselle Yvette, your servant."

"Ah, Monsieur de Belvigne," said she.

Then, turning toward Saval, she introduced the newcomer:

"My aspirant, big, fat, rich, and stupid. That's the way I like them. A real brass-band leader. Oh, but you are taller than he. Let me see, how shall I baptize you? I shall call you Monsieur de Rhodes, Jr., because your father must have been a giant. You two must have interesting things to tell each other over everybody else's head, so good evening."

And she went toward the orchestra, to tell the musicians to play a quadrille.

Madame Obardi said distractedly, just to say something:

"You tease her all the time, and you are making her temper ugly, besides encouraging and even creating evil traits."

He replied:

"Have you not then terminated her education?"

She pretended not to understand, and continued to smile serenely.

Just then, perceiving a solemn gentleman, seemingly dressed in medals, she hurried toward him:

“ Ah! Prince, how nice of you to come.”

While drawing Saval away, Servigny said to him:

“ That is the last one of my serious rivals, the Prince Kravalow. Is she not superbly beautiful? ”

“ I think they are both extremely so. The mother suits me.”

Servigny bowed:

“ At your disposition, old man.”

The quadrille was about to begin, and the two friends, being in the way, were shoved here and there by the joyous couples.

“ Let us go see the Knights of the Green Cloth.”

They went into the gambling parlor.

Lookers-on were gathered around the table, gazing intently at what was taking place there. Very little talking was done; the tinkle of money was the predominant sound, as if it were asserting itself above the cry of human voices.

They all wore medals, strange-colored ribbons, the same stern expression. They were especially distinguishable by their beards.

The stiff American with his horse-shoe, the proud Englishman with his beard spread like a fan over his breast, the Spaniard with his jet-black hairs almost hiding his eyes, the Roman with that enormous mustache which Victor Emmanuel created for Italy, the Austrian with his whiskers and shaved chin, the Russian general with bristling mustache, and Frenchmen with gallant mustaches, revealed the fancy of barbers of many different parts of the world.

“ Do you play? ” asked Servigny.

“ No; do you? ”

“ Not here. Do you want to leave? We shall

come back on a more quiet day. There are too many people, you cannot become acquainted properly."

As soon as they were in the street, Sérvigny asked:

"Well, what do you think of the place?"

"Very interesting. I prefer the ladies to all the rest."

"I should say so. Those women are the elixir of love. You feel the atmosphere at the slightest contact with them, just as you smell perfume at a perfume shop. Artistic . . . to their finger-tips . . . and delicate . . . to a nicety. Expensive . . . oh, yes . . . but you cannot regret your money."

Saval asked:

"Who is the paymaster of these ceremonies?"

Servigny shrugged his shoulders, to show his ignorance.

"I really do not know. The last one was an English peer, who disappeared three months ago. She may now derive her income from the gambling, or, possibly, from the gamblers, for she sometimes has caprices. But, tell me now, is it certain we shall go to Bougival to dine Saturday? I shall have a better opportunity in the country, where formality is comparatively absent, to study Yvette thoroughly."

Saval answered:

"I have nothing to do that day, so I am willing."

As they walked through the Champs-Élysées, Servigny kept silent, wrapt in his thoughts about Yvette. Finally he exclaimed:

"Good heavens! what I wouldn't give to be Yvette's first lover! I should give—I should give
——"

Before Servigny had decided what he would give, the pair had reached the Rue Royale, where Saval bid him good night, and left him to continue his way alone.



CHAPTER II

A HOT PURSUIT



THE table was set on the veranda overlooking the river. The villa, named "Spring," was midway up the hill, right at the bend of the Seine, just before arriving at Marly.

An island, Croissy by name, opposite the house, made a splendid horizon with its mass of green trees, and a considerable length of the large river could be seen, as far as the floating café of the Grenouillère, which was hidden by thick foliage.

It was one of those calm evenings, vividly colored, such as are often enjoyed on the banks of a river and that give a real sensation of happiness. Not the slightest breath of wind disturbed the branches of the trees nor the clear, mirror-like surface of the Seine. And still, it was not too warm; it was just right; one felt most comfortable. A certain beneficial coolness, as it were, seemed to emanate from the banks of the river.

The sun was gradually disappearing behind the trees, bound for other countries, and one aspired, it seemed, a most delightful well-being from the earth slumbering already in the peace of this vast space.

When they left the parlor to go to dinner, they all remained in ecstasy before this grand spectacle. A sweetly softened gaiety invaded all hearts: they felt that they were going to be so happy, to dine in this landscape, with such a large river and beautiful dying day for a background, breathing in at the same time, a clear and balmy air.

The Marquise had taken Saval's arm, and Yvette that of Servigny.

There were just the four.

The women seemed altogether different to what they were in Paris, Yvette especially.

She hardly spoke, she appeared languorous, serious.

Saval, not recognizing her any more, asked her:

"Is there anything the matter with you, Mademoiselle? You are so changed. You have become so calm and reasonable."

She answered:

"It is the country that has produced this effect upon me. I am not the same. I feel queer. But I am never the same, not even for two consecutive days. To-day I shall look like an insane person, to-morrow like an elegy. I change all the time, I do not know how. Some days I should like to kill people, not animals; I would never kill an animal; and then other days I cry for the least little thing. A whole swarm of different ideas go through my head. It all depends upon how I rise. Every morning, when I awake, I can tell you what I am going to be

like until evening. It may be our dreams that predispose us in that way. It depends also upon the book I am reading."

She was dressed in a white flannel suit, which enveloped her in the floating softness of the goods. Her loose waist, with large plaits, indicated, without showing it, and, although not closely fitted, a solid and already womanly form. And her delicate neck emerged from a froth of white lace, fairer than her dress, a precious jewel of skin and flesh, that bore her heavy mass of golden hair.

Servigny looked at her a long time, and finally said:

"You are adorable this evening, Mam'zelle. I should like to see you always so."

She said to him, with a smack of her usual roguishness:

"Do not propose to me, Muscade. I might take it seriously, and it would be mighty costly to you."

The Marquise seemed happy, very happy. All in black, nobly draped in a simple dress that enhanced her well-defined lines, a little red in her waist, a wreath of red pinks hung from her belt, she seemed to be impregnated with an uncommon ardor, which betrayed itself in the whole of her person, in the simplicity of her dress, upon which the flowers looked as if they were bleeding; in her eyes, that fell heavily, as it were, upon the company; in her subdued voice, in her rare motions.

Saval also appeared serious, absorbed. Every now and then, taking his beard in his hand, which he stroked caressingly, he seemed lost in deep thought.

An intense silence reigned for a few minutes.

As they were passing the trout, Sérvigny declared:

"Silence is sometimes very agreeable. Often people are in closer contact with another when silent than when talking; isn't that so, Marquise?"

"That is true," said she, turning a little toward him. "It is delightful to think of nice things together."

And she looked at Saval; the two remained a few seconds in a staring contemplation of each other.

A slight movement, almost invisible, took place under the table.

Servigny revived the conversation:

"Mam'zelle Yvette, you will have me believe you are in love, if you continue to be so serious. With whom could you be in love? Let us see, if you do not mind. I shall omit the less important of your aspirants. I shall only bother with the principal ones. With the Prince Kravalow?"

At the sound of this name Yvette was roused:

"How could you think of such a thing, Muscade? He looks like a wax figure of a Russian that has won medals in a hair-dressers' and barbers' exposition."

"So much for him; but there is the Vicomte Pierre de Belvigne."

This time she broke into a peal of laughter, and said:

"Do you see me clasping Raisiné around the neck (she gave everybody nicknames), and murmuring up his nose:

"My dear little Peter, my divine Pedro, my adored Pietri, my charming Pierrot, give your big poodle head to your dearie, who wants to kiss it'?"

Servigny announced:

"Take away Number Two. Now the Chevalier Valeali, whom your mother favors."

Yvette had regained her former gaiety:

"Tearful? He is worse than the Magdalen. He is only good for funerals. Every time I see him I think I am dead."

"Is it a case of love at first sight? The Baron Saval."

"Monsieur de Rhodes? Oh, no. I should feel as if I were loving a triumphal arch."

"Then it must be with me. Modesty and prudence kept me from suggesting myself first. I have only to thank you."

She answered, gracefully joyous:

"With you, Muscade? No, indeed. I like you, but do not love you. Wait, I do not want to discourage you entirely. I do not love you . . . yet. You have a good chance . . . perhaps. . . . Persevere, Muscade; be devoted, attentive, obedient, yielding to my strangest whims, ready to please me at all times, and—we shall—see . . . later."

"But, Mam'zelle, I should rather furnish all that after, if you do not mind."

She asked roguishly:

"After what? . . . Muscade."

"After you will have proved that you love me."

"Well, act as if I did love you, and believe it, if you want to. . . ."

"But. . . ."

"Silence; that is enough about that."

He saluted military fashion.

The sun had sunk beyond the island, but the whole sky seemed still enflamed, and the calm waters of the river were apparently changed to blood. The

reflected light of the horizon reddened all the houses, objects, and even the people.

As Yvette was looking away into the distance before her the Marquise put her hand, unconsciously, as it were, on that of Saval; but when the young girl moved, the Marquise withdrew it and began fixing something in her waist.

Sérvigny, who had not lost anything of this comedy, proposed:

“ If you want to, Mam’zelle, we shall take a walk on the island, after dinner? ”

“ Oh, yes! ” she cried joyously; “ and we shall go alone, too? ”

“ Yes, all alone, Mam’zelle. ”

Then silence again reigned.

The vast silence of the horizon, the sleepy restfulness of the evening benumbed all hearts, bodies, and voices. There are quiet hours, hours of meditation, when it is almost impossible to speak.

The servants served noiselessly. The fixed firmament seemed to glow less and less, and night was about to open entirely her wings over the earth. Saval asked:

“ Do you expect to stay long in this country? ”

The Marquise emphasized each word:

“ Yes. As long as I shall be happy in it. ”

As it became impossible to see any more, lamps were brought out. They threw a strange, pale light on the table under the great obscurity of space; and presently a torrent of flies fell upon the tablecloth. They were small flies that went to be cremated over the lamp chimney, and became a sort of light-gray dust, powdering the white linen.

One could not help drinking them in the wine, eating them in the sauces, and seeing them on the

bread. They even annoyed the diners by coming in crowds and tickling their hands and faces.

The beverages had to be thrown away, the plates covered, and infinite precautions used to protect the dishes.

Yvette was much amused. Servigny did his best to protect her and her dishes from this invasion, using his napkin as a weapon. But the Marquise was soon disgusted, and hurried the rest of the dinner through.

Yvette, who had not forgotten Sérigny's promise, said to him:

"Let us go on the island now."

Her mother recommended in languorous tones:

"Do not stay long. We shall accompany you as far as the boatman's."

And they walked in couples, the young girl and her friend being in the lead. They could hear in back of them the Marquise speaking very low and fast. It was a jet-black night. But the heavens glittered with little bits of fire, and apparently sowed them in the river, for the water was also aglow with them.

The frogs croaked, and the robin redbreasts whistled their shrill notes in the calm air.

Yvette asked, all of a sudden:

"Where are they? I do not hear them walking any more."

And she called:

"Mother!"

No one answered.

"They cannot be far away; I heard them only a little while ago."

"They must have gone back," murmured Sérigny. "Your mother may have been cold."

In front of them a light shone. It was Martinet's inn. They called for some one, and a man came out, installed them in a boat that was tied to a mass of sea-weeds, near the bank.

They soon reached the other side, where they disappeared in the forest of trees.

A certain freshness exhaled from the wet ground and hovered above the thickly leaved branches, that looked as if they carried as many birds as leaves.

Far away in the distance a piano was playing a popular waltz.

Servigny had taken Yvette's arm, and little by little had wound his arm around her, softly tightening his hold.

"What are you thinking of?" said he.

"Nothing. I am so happy."

"Do you not love me?"

"Yes, yes, Muscade, I love you a great deal; only let that subject drop. This is too pleasant to stop and listen to your foolishness."

He drew her toward him, although she tried to snatch herself away, and the warmth of her body affected him. He stammered:

"Yvette."

"Well?"

"I love you."

"You are joking."

"No, I am not; I have loved you for ever so long a time."

She was continually trying to escape, attempting to withdraw her arm crushed between the two bodies. And they walked along, every which way, like two persons under the influence of liquor.

He was at a loss as to what to say to her, for he understood that she could not be dealt with as

with an ordinary woman; yet he did not know whether she consented or really did not comprehend him. He racked his brain to find the right words, tender and decisive enough.

Every second he was repeating:

“Yvette, tell me, Yvette.”

Then, casting away all sentiment of prudence, he kissed her upon the cheek. She stepped aside and said impatiently:

“You are simply too ridiculous. Can you not leave me alone?”

The tone of her voice was not very sharp, and really did not make clear what she thought of this, nor what she wanted; perceiving she was not over-irritated, he kissed her in the neck just where it started, a spot which he had long observed and worshiped. She tore away from him.

He was stupefied at her rapid escape and disappearance, and it was a few seconds before he called:

“Yvette!”

She did not answer. He searched for her, keeping an eye open for any light object which might resemble the whiteness of her garment.

“Mam’zette Ivette.”

The robin redbreasts were no longer heard.

Vaguely annoyed, he hurried his step and strengthened his call:

“Mam’zelle Yvette! Mam’zelle Yvette!”

No sound; he stopped a moment to listen. There was not the least noise; hardly a shiver of the leaves above him. The frogs alone croaked.

He wandered from bush to bush. He even went to the bank opposite Bougival, and returned to the Grenouillère, in the neighborhood of which he continued his search, repeating:

“Mam’zelle Yvette, where are you? Answer. It was only a joke. For heaven’s sake, answer! Do not keep me hunting like that.”

The bell of a distant clock began to ring. He counted the number of strokes—twelve. He had been wandering about two hours. It suddenly dawned upon him that she might have gone home alone, so he went back, too.

A servant, sleeping in the vestibule, was waiting for him.

Servigny woke him up and asked:

“When did Mademoiselle Yvette get back? I left her because I had a visit to pay.”

The servant answered:

“Yes, Monsieur le Duc. Mademoiselle Yvette came back before ten o’clock.”

He went to his room and then to bed.

But he remained there wide awake, unable to sleep. That stolen kiss had upset him. He mused. What did she want? What was she thinking of? How pretty, how attractive!

His desires, calmed down by the life he led, by former conquests, by lovers of all sorts, regained their vigor before this singular child, so young, enervating, and inexplicable.

He heard the clock strike one, then two. It was useless, he could not sleep. He was uncomfortably warm and perspiring. His heart beat heavily, and so did his temples. He opened the window. A cool whiff of air came in, and he drank it in long draughts. It was a very dark night. But suddenly he perceived right ahead of him, in the garden, a shining speck, like a red-hot piece of coal. He thought:

“A cigar? It can only be Saval.” He called.

“ Léon.”

A voice answered:

“ Is it you, Jean? ”

“ Yes. Wait a minute, and I shall come down with you.”

He dressed hastily, joined his friend, who was enjoying a cigar.

“ What are you doing down here, at such an hour? ”

Saval answered:

“ Taking a rest.”

He laughed. Servigny shook hands with him:

“ My congratulations, old man. As for me, I am bored . . . to death.”

“ That means? ”

“ It means that Yvette and her mother are not exactly the same.”

“ What happened? Tell me.”

Servigny told of his unsuccessful attempt, and went on:

“ That girl upsets me. Just think of it, old man, I could not go to sleep. What a queer thing a girl is! Looks simple and yet she is a puzzle. A woman of worldly experience, who has lived and loved, can be easily penetrated. But a young maiden is a riddle. I am beginning to think she is making a fool of me.”

Saval was rocking his chair, but stopped to say:

“ Beware! she'll bring you to wedlock. There are illustrious examples. The Comtesse de Montijo, who at least was of a good family, used similar wiles to become empress. Do not play Napoleon.”

Servigny murmured:

“ As far as that is concerned I am not afraid,

for I'm neither simpleton nor an emperor. Are you sleepy? "

" No, not at all."

" Let us stroll along the river bank."

They opened the gate and went down along the river toward Marly.

It was one of those cool moments that just precede the day, the hour of deep sleep and absolute rest and calm. The light, familiar noises of the night were hushed. The robin redbreasts did not sing, and the frogs had ceased their din.

Servigny, who was at times a poet and philosopher, said all of a sudden:

" She really upsets me. In arithmetic one and one make two. In love one and one make one, and still they make two. Have you ever felt that? That need of absorbing a woman in you or disappearing in her. I do not mean the need of an embrace, but that torment, both moral and mental, of becoming one with another being; of exposing before him or her your soul, your heart; and, also, of penetrating into his or her innermost thoughts. Yet you are as ignorant of that being; you never discover all the fluctuations of his or her wishes, desires, even opinions. You never really succeed in comprehending the unknown, the mystery of a soul that you feel so near you; of a soul hidden behind two eyes that look at you, limpid as the waters, transparent as if there were no secret back of them; of a soul that speaks to you through a beloved mouth; of a soul that hurls its thoughts at you, one by one, by means of words, though it still remains so far away from you as the stars are from one another, even more impenetrable than they are. Curious, is it not? "

Saval answered:

“ I don’t go in as deeply as all that. I never try to see behind the eyes. I do not bother with what is wrapped up as much as I do with the external wrapper.”

And Servigny:

“ But Yvette is singular. How will she greet me this morning? ”

As they reached Marly, they noticed that the sky was becoming pale.

“ It is time to return,” declared Saval.

They did so. When Servigny entered his room he saw the pink horizon from his window.

He closed the shutters, pulled and carefully crossed one curtain over the other, went to bed, and finally fell asleep.

He dreamed of Yvette throughout his slumbers.

A peculiar noise woke him. He sat up, listened, but heard nothing. Then a noise like the fall of hail came to his ears.

He jumped out of bed, ran to the window, opened it, and saw Yvette in the alley, who threw handfuls of sand in his face.

She was dressed in pink, wore a large-brimmed hat with a big feather in it, and laughed maliciously:

“ Well, Muscade, are you still sleeping? What did you do last night, to wake up so late? Out on an adventure, my poor Muscade? ”

He was dazed by violent daylight, still tired, and, above all, surprised at the mocking composure of the young girl.

He answered:

“ I shall be down presently. Just a few minutes to dress.”

“ Hurry up. It is ten o’clock, and I have something important to tell you about a plot we are

going to form. Besides, we shall have lunch at eleven."

He found her on a bench with a book of some sort, most probably a novel. She took his arm in a frank, familiar way, as if nothing had taken place, and led him to the garden.

"Here is my proposition: We are going to disobey mother, and you will bring me to the Grenouillère. I want to see it. Mother says that honest women should not go there. But it makes no difference to me what you should or should not do. You will bring me, will you not, Muscade? and we shall have a great time."

She exhaled a delicious odor, without his being able to determine its nature, so vague and discreet it was.

Where did it come from? Her dress, her hair, or her skin. That was what he asked himself as she was speaking to him, so near, that he could smell her breath, which was equally delicious in odor. He came to the conclusion it was the perfume of her graceful and attractive youth.

She said:

"You promise, do you not, Muscade? As it's going to be very warm, mother'll refuse to go out. We shall leave her with your friend. They shall think that we are going to the woods. Oh, how glad I shall be to see the Grenouillère!"

Just then they were at the gate in front of the Seine. The sun shone on the shining surface of the river.

Every now and then a canoe or a rowboat passed, or the shrill whistles, short or prolonged, of the trains that brought the inhabitants of Paris in the suburbs, could be heard.

Lunch was announced.

No one spoke. A crushingly hot July noon oppressed every one. The heat seemed thick, and paralyzed body and soul.

Yvette, alone, although taciturn, seemed animated, nervous, and impatient.

As soon as the dessert had been served, she suggested:

“ Suppose we take a walk in the woods. It would be fine under the trees.”

The Marquise, who looked to be very tired, murmured:

“ Are you insane? How can a person go out in such weather? ”

The young girl was overjoyed, and said:

“ Well, then, we shall let you have the baron for company. Muscade and I shall climb up the hill, and we shall lie on the grass and read.”

And, turning toward Servigny:

“ Does that suit you? ”

“ At your service,” answered he.

The Marquise shrugged her shoulders and sighed:

“ Really, she is crazy.”

Then she tendered her hand to the Baron languorously, and he kissed it.

Yvette and Servigny went away. They followed the bank of the river, crossed the bridge, and sat down under the weeping willows that were on the edge of the island.

The young girl drew from her pocket a book, and said:

“ Muscade, you are going to read to me.”

He was on the verge of running away.

“ But I am unable to read aloud, decently.”

She replied seriously:

“ No excuses, now. You are a nice aspirant. Everything for nothing? Is that your motto? ”

He took the book, opened it, and was much surprised. It was the description of the ants' mode of life, by an English author. And as he remained silent, thinking she was really making a fool of him, she grew impatient.

“ Why don't you read? ” she inquired.

“ Is it a bet or a caprice? ” he asked.

“ I saw the book in a store. They told me it was the best on the subject, and I thought it would be interesting to learn about these small animals that run through the grass. Read! ”

She lay down on the grass outstretched, resting on her elbows, her head in her hands, and eyes fixed upon the ground.

He read in monotonous tones, stopping every little while to ask:

“ Is not that enough? ”

She shook her little head, and, having found an ant on a piece of a torn blade of grass, she kept the insect on it to study it closely. She listened attentively to all the surprising details of information about their life and customs.

And, as if a maternal tenderness had been awakened in her, Yvette gradually became full of sympathy for this little animal, so intelligent and cunning; she even let it run along her finger, and felt the desire to kiss it.

Just as Servigny was reading about the way in which they held contests of skill and strength, the enthusiastic young girl tried to kiss the insect, that immediately escaped and began to travel over her face. She gave a shrill cry as if threatened with an

awful danger, and tapped her face frantically. Her companion, laughing heartily, took the ant out of her hair, and substituted a kiss in its place; Yvette did not turn her forehead away this time.

She rose and declared:



“That’s more interesting than novels. Let’s go to the Grenouillère now.”

They arrived in the part of the island turned into a park full of immense trees. A few couples meandered under the high leaves, along the banks of the Seine, in which glided many rowboats. There were women with young men, working girls with their lovers in shirt-sleeves, their frock-coats thrown

under an arm, tilted high hats, tipsy and tired out, also *bourgeois* with their families.

A far-off continuous rumor of human voices, a dimly grumbling clamor, announced the favorite establishment of the boatmen.

It loomed up before them, all of a sudden. An immense boat, with a tent covering, was anchored near the shore, carrying a world of females and males, drinking, or else standing up, shouting, singing, howling, dancing, cutting up capers, to the noise of a screeching piano, out of tune, and vibrating like a tin can.

Tall, red-headed, licentious women, displaying themselves in their most exciting manner, meandered, staring at the men, with the insistence typical of inebriate women, and coarse language upon their reddened lips.

The smell of perspiration and colognes was strongly noticeable.

The drinkers swallowed liquors of all colors, and shouted, bawled, evidently yielding to the need of regular brutes, of having their ears full of these abominable noises.

Every few seconds, a swimmer jumped into the water, which splashed over the nearest drinkers, who yelled savagely.

The river was full of small boats. Long, thin canoes passed swiftly by, paddled by rowers with bare arms, whose muscles twisted under their sun-burnt skin.

Heavier boats also wended their way, loaded with people. A schoolboy, on a lark, trying to be smart, rowed with strokes worthy of a windmill, and struck the other crafts, thus raising an outcry from their inmates, and then he disappeared,

somewhat less flippant, not without having, however, just missed drowning two bathers.

Yvette was radiantly gleeful, and walked arm in arm with Sérvigny in the midst of this noisy and mixed crowd, seemingly overjoyed at elbowing this disreputable company, especially the women, whom she observed with a tranquil, even sympathetic, eye.

“Look at that one, Muscade; she seems to be having a great time. And what beautiful hair she has.”

When a pianist, dressed in red, and wearing an immensely large trimmed hat, started playing a waltz, Yvette suddenly grasped her companion, and carried him away with the furious energy that characterized her dancing. They danced so long and so frantically that everybody watched them. The drinkers, standing on the tables, beat time with their feet; others used glasses; the musician seemed to have become mad, he hit the ivory keys so hard, lifted his hand high up, made all sorts of bodily motions, throwing his head every which way.

He stopped suddenly, dropped his whole length upon the floor, hidden under his hat, and pretended to be dead of exhaustion. Peals of laughter broke forth throughout the café, and all applauded.

Four friends rushed over, as in an accident, picked him up, taking hold of each one of his arms and legs, and paraded him around the island.

A joker followed them, starting the *De Profundis*, and a procession was formed; every one joined the band.

Yvette did, too, laughing heartily, talking to everybody, excited by the noise and movement. Young men stared at her, pressed against her; Sérvigny,

was growing afraid that the outing was going to take a bad turn.

The procession kept on, gradually increasing its speed, till the four bearers began to run, with a bawling crowd at their heels. When they arrived at the banks of the river, they swung their friend in it.

A loud cry of joy came from all throats, while the dazed pianist paddled back to shore, cursing, coughing, spitting out the water, and finally struggling desperately to emerge from the mud.

Yvette clapped her hands for joy, and repeated:

“Oh, Muscade, what a grand time we’re having!”

Servigny observed her seriously, and was somewhat vexed, or hurt, to see her so much at home in such a crowd. His natural instinct of the born gentleman was shocked.

He said to himself, in astonishment:

“You have it in the blood.”

He felt like speaking familiarly to her, as one does a certain class of women at the first meeting. She was, to him, then, at least, of the same stock. Their obscene, filthy language did not seem to produce any effect upon Yvette.

“Muscade, I want to take a swim.”

He answered, curtly:

“All right, Mam’zelle.”

They soon had procured themselves suits. She was the first to be ready, and stood on the beach, smiling, exposed to the gaze of all. Then they went together in the heated water.

She swam, wrapt in happiness and the waters that went to and fro, softly caressing her body, gracefully rocked by the ripples of the river. Sud-

denly ceasing to swim, she turned over and floated. His eyes devoured her almost, as she lay on top the water, exposing the undulating lines of her body and firm breast, enhanced by the very close-fitting bathing suit.

He was entranced by her beauty. He was again beside himself. She suddenly turned toward him,



and, having contemplated him a while, began to laugh.

“ You’re a nice fellow,” she said.

He was irritated and hurt by this mocking demeanor, and an evil spirit rose in him; a revengeful one, which made him try to be cutting, even insulting:

“ Would you fancy such a life? ”

"What life?"

"Come, don't try to fool me. You know what I mean."

"Upon my word, I don't."

"Stop this farce. Do you, or don't you?"

"I don't understand you."

"You're not so stupid. Besides, I told you, yesterday evening."

"I must have forgotten."

"That I love you."

"You?"

"I."

"What foolishness!"

"I assure you, upon my honor."

"Prove it."

"That's my greatest wish."

"Which?"

"To prove it."

"Go ahead."

"You didn't say that yesterday."

"But you didn't propose anything."

"Ridiculous."

"Besides, I am not the one to approach on that score."

"Well, that's a good one. Who is, then?"

"Mother, of course."

"Your mother? Oh, that's too comical," and he burst out laughing.

She suddenly became grave, and looked straight into his eyes:

"Listen, Muscade, if you really love me enough to marry me, speak to mother first; and then I'll answer you."

Now, more than ever, he thought she was making a fool of him, and he became enraged.

"You must surely mistake me for some one else."

She again directed her clear, soft eyes upon him, and said, after some hesitation:

"I don't understand you, yet."

Then he blurted out, with a rough and coarse ring in his voice:

"Please put an end to this ridiculous comedy that has already lasted too long. Don't play the innocent baby; it doesn't become you. You know very well that there can be no marriage between us—only love. I told you I loved you—that's the truth—I repeat it, I love you. Now, don't pretend not to understand."

They were in the water, just keeping their heads above it, face to face. She remained motionless for a few seconds, stunned, unable to penetrate the meaning of these words; then she blushed very deeply.

The blood rushed to her head, and, without another word, she swam at top speed toward land. He was unable to catch up with her.

He saw her pick up her wrapper and rush into her cabin.

He took a long time to dress, extremely perplexed as to what to do next, whether to excuse himself or persevere.

When he was ready, she was gone. He returned home slowly, anxious and troubled.

The Marquise was strolling with the Baron in the garden, on the lawn.

Perceiving Servigny, she said, in that languorous way which had been hers for the past two days:

"Didn't I tell you not to go out in such

weather? Now Yvette is sunstruck. She's gone to bed. She's as red as a poppy, and has a fearful headache. Neither of you has any sense."

The young girl did not come down to supper. When something to eat was sent to her, she answered she was not hungry, and begged to be left alone. The two guests returned by the ten-o'clock train, and the Marquise remained silent and dreamy.

She lived for and by love, just as an enthusiastic horseman or sailor, and experienced sudden attacks of passion as one does of a disease. They enervated or left her apathetic, according to their exalted, violent, dramatic, or sentimental character.

She was born to love and be loved. Risen from a very low station in life to luxury through love, which she chose unconsciously for a profession, instinctively she accepted money as naturally as the embrace which procured it. Many men had enjoyed her caresses, without her having felt any affection, nor any disgust, for them.

She tolerated their embraces indiscriminately, with tranquil indifference, as a matter of course; just as the traveler necessarily eats the differently prepared meals of many lands, for, after all is said and done, one must live. Though sometimes her heart was struck with the fire of love, and she was again and again the victim of a grand passion that lasted a few weeks or months, according to the physical or moral qualities of the man.

Those were the delightful moments of her life. She loved, body and soul, with ardor and a complete abandonment of herself. She threw herself into it as one does in a river to drown, and gave up her entire self, ready to die, if needs be, transported

into an ecstatic happiness. The latest intrigue was, to her fervid imagination, the deepest passion of her life, and she would have been very much astonished had she been reminded of the many men who had been the object of her dreams and night watches, spent in the contemplation of the stars.

Saval had captivated her, body and soul. She thought of him, his features were photographed in her mind, and she was happy, feeling secure with a certainty of her present joy.

She heard a noise behind her. Yvette had just entered, dressed in her usual manner, but pale and with a noticeable brilliancy in the eyes, as if she had just undergone some great fatigue.

"I want to speak to you," said she.

The Marquise, rather astonished, looked at her. She loved her daughter, selfishly, proud of her beauty, as of a fortune, for she was too beautiful herself to be jealous; she was too indifferent to be really guilty of the plans which were imputed to her in reference to her daughter.

"I am listening, child," said she.

Yvette looked at her piercingly, in order to catch the real effect that her words were going to produce.

"Something extraordinary took place to-day."

"What?"

"Monsieur de Servigny told me he loved me."

The Marquise waited anxiously. As Yvette did not continue, she asked:

"How did he say it? Explain."

Then Yvette threw herself at her mother's feet, in an affectionate pose, that was familiar to her, and, pressing her hands in her own, added:

"He asked me to marry him."

The Marquise Obardi was stupefied, and cried:
“Servigny? You’re crazy.”

Yvette did not take her eyes off her mother, seeking to espy thoroughly her thoughts and surprise. She asked gravely:

“Why am I crazy? Why wouldn’t Monsieur de Servigny marry me?”

The Marquise, visibly embarrassed, stammered:

“That can’t be; you are mistaken. You did not hear or understand rightly. M. de Servigny is too rich for you, and too—too—Parisian to get married.”

Yvette rose slowly, saying:

“But if he loves me as he says.”

Her mother answered impatiently:

“I thought you were old enough, and knew enough, not to put such ideas in your head. Sérigny is a man of the world and extremely selfish. He will marry a woman of his means and station. If he said he wanted to marry—he really meant to —”

The Marquise was incapable of unveiling her suspicions, and remained silent.

“Pshaw, leave me alone,” said she, at last, “and go to bed.”

“Yes, mother.”

She kissed her mother on the forehead, and calmly went away.

As she was about to leave the room, the Marquise called her back:

“How’s your sunstroke?”

“There was nothing the matter with me, except that I was troubled by Servigny’s talk.”

And the Marquise added:

“We shall come back to that subject. Above

all, henceforth, don't stay alone with him, and rest assured he will not marry you, that he merely wants to—dally with you.”

That was the best way the Marquise knew how to express herself. Yvette returned to her room.

Madame Obardi began to think.

For many years she had lived quietly and happily in her luxury, and had cast aside all serious thoughts. She had never considered Yvette's future; that had always been a matter which she put off until the question should come up itself, imperiously demanding a solution. She well knew her daughter could never marry a rich man, of good family, except by some almost impossible good fortune, which has once in a while placed an adventuress on a throne. Besides, she never hoped such a thing; and she was too busy combining plans for herself to bother about anything which did not concern her directly.

Would she follow her mother's footsteps? Why not? But the Marquise had never stopped to think how that would come about.

And here came her daughter, without her expecting such a thing, with one of those questions that are practically unanswerable, and which forced her to arrive at a conclusion in an affair so difficult, dangerous, delicate, from all points of view, especially so perplexing to your conscience, when your own child's life is at stake, in reference to such matters.

She was too keen, though, to be mistaken as to Servigny's intentions; she knew men by experience, particularly those of his class. This knowledge, then, made her involuntarily cry:

“Servigny marry you? You're crazy.”

Why had he tried the old game, this *roué*, man of the world? What would be his next move? How could one make Yvette understand, open her eyes? She might, perhaps, be led astray.

Who would believe that a girl of her age and education could be so innocent?

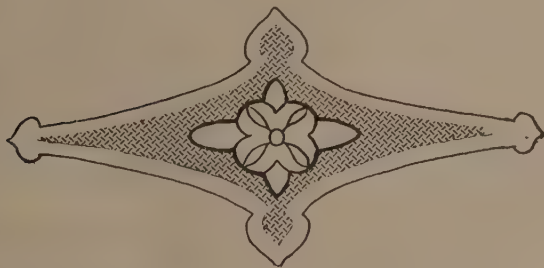
The Marquise was worried, though soon tired of thinking so seriously. She sought to decide something; but in vain, the situation was far too complicated and embarrassing.

Weary of her troubles, she thought:

“Pshaw! I’ll watch them more closely, and await developments. If needs be, I shall speak to Servigny, who will soon comprehend me.”

She did not, however, ask herself what she would say, nor what he might answer, nor even what agreement might be reached; still, she was happy to be thus relieved of her cares, without having had the trouble of forming a resolution, and her thoughts drifted back to Saval. She threw rapid kisses toward the direction of Paris, and murmured:

“I love you! I love you!”





CHAPTER III

A TERRIBLE REVELATION



ND Yvette did not sleep. Just as her mother, she was looking out the open window, and tears, her first sad tears, filled her eyes.

Up till the present time she had lived in the reckless and serene faith of her happy childhood! Why had she thought, reflected, analyzed? Why should she not have been like all other young girls? Why did a doubt, a fear, suspicions, all painful, come to her mind?

She seemed very knowing, because, apparently, she touched upon all subjects, and had imitated the manner and tone of the people around her. But she was no wiser than a little boarding-school girl; her audacity of speech, often *risque*, was due to her extraordinary powers of assimilation, and not to any conscious science on her part.

She spoke of love as a painter's or musician's son speaks of their father's art, at the age of twelve. She well knew, or rather, suspected, what

kind of mystery shrouded this word—too many allusions had been whispered before her to leave her entirely ignorant—but how could she know that other families were different?

People kissed her mother's hand with apparent respect. All their acquaintances bore titles, seemed rich, well connected. Two king's sons came evenings to see her mother. How could she guess?

She was naturally naïve. She did not go into the bottom of things, nor study people, as was her mother's custom. She lived in her own happiness.

But now Servigny, by means of a few words, of which she instinctively felt the brutality, had awakened in her a sudden uneasiness, unfounded at first, but later transformed into a tantalizing apprehension.

She had shut herself up, run away like a wounded beast, hurt very deeply by those words, which she repeated ceaselessly, just to penetrate their full purport: "You well know that between us it isn't a question of marriage, but of love."

What did he mean? Why this injury? Was she ignorant of some secret shame? Was she the only one who was? What was it? She was disheartened, as when one discovers a hidden infamy, the faithlessness of a beloved person, or is unhappy in a love affair that has absorbed one's sole ambition in life.

She had cried, searched, brooded, a pitiable prey to vague fears and doubts. Then she compared her situation to that of novels she had read, and was almost consoled by the romances which her imagination built to suit the occasion.

Was she, by chance, the natural daughter of a prince? Had her mother been seduced and aban-

doned by some king, the King Victor Emmanuel, perchance, and had been obliged to flee before the wrath of the royal family?

No; she was more likely a forsaken child, fruit of a guilty union, of very exalted parents, who had been intrusted to the Marquise, who had adopted and brought her up.

Other conjectures, also, kept her mind active. She sorted them, now accepting, now rejecting their probability. She soon became, in her own eyes, a heroine of the same stamp as are found in Scribe's and George Sand's works. Her ever-changing nature was almost happy in this new situation.

She had meditated a long time, until late evening, and had eagerly worked out a scheme to worm the truth out of her mother, which succeeded in part.

She had expected a greater surprise, on her mother's part, an affecting scene, and the unveiling of a great secret.

But she was disappointed. Her mother just looked annoyed; her constrained air, her uneasy attitude, that betrayed a certain degree of reticence, made the young girl understand it would be better not to insist, that the mystery was of another, baser character, which she would have to unravel herself. She went back to her room with a heavy heart, her soul and spirit really and painfully sad. She wept for a long time, with her elbows on the window-sill, her head in her hands.

The coolness of the early morning hours forced her to leave the window and go to bed.

The next and the following day saw her very reserved and melancholy. The process of reflection was becoming rapidly familiar to her; she was

learning to spy, guess, and reason. She saw everything and everybody in a new light; a suspicion was rising in her mind, against all, everything she had formerly believed, even her mother. By Wednesday, she had hit upon a line of conduct and action, a real system of spying. She rose Thursday morning, with the intention of being as crafty as a detective, and on her guard against every one.

Saval and Servigny arrived at about ten o'clock. She greeted them with a certain reserve, without affectation, familiarly:

"How are you, Muscade?"

"Pretty well, thank you; and yourself?"

He watched her.

"What's her new game, now?" said he to himself.

The Marquise took Saval's arm, and Servigny gave his to Yvette, and took a walk around the lawn.

Yvette, quiet and thoughtful, looked down upon the sand in the path, apparently not listening to her companion, nor answering him.

Suddenly she inquired:

"Are you a true friend, Muscade?"

"Why, surely, Mam'zelle."

"But a real, faithful one?"

"Your friend, body and soul."

"True enough never to lie once to me?"

"Never."

"To the point of telling the whole, naked, bare truth?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, what do you really think, at bottom, of the Prince Kravalow?"

"Hum!"

"See, you're getting ready to lie."

"No, indeed. I am trying to find the right words. Well, he's a Russian, a real one, who speaks Russian, who may have had a passport to get into France, and whose only false attributes are his name and title."

"You mean to say he is——"

He hesitated, but finally making up his mind, said:

"An adventurer, Mam'zelle."

"Thanks. Chevalier Valreali is no better."

"Just as you say."

"Monsieur de Belvigne?"

"He's of another sort. He is a gentleman—provincial, honorable—to a certain degree—slightly indebted."

"And yourself?"

He answered unhesitatingly:

"I am one of those who are vulgarly called 'rounders,' member of a good family, having, once upon a time, possessed a certain degree of intelligence, which I wasted trying to be witty; splendid health, lost by a fast life; some intrinsic worth, which was lost through idleness. All I have left is a certain amount of money, a fair worldly knowledge, a complete absence of prejudice, a strong contempt of men, even women, a very clear realization of the uselessness of my acts, and a vast toleration for roguery. Yet, I am frank, at times, as you may observe, and even capable of a sincere affection, as you could ascertain, if you only would. Such as I am, I gladly offer myself to you."

She was not laughing; she listened attentively to get his real meaning.

She added:

“What do you think of the Comtesse de Lammy?”

He quickly replied:

“Please excuse me from giving my opinion of the women.”

“Isn’t there one of them——”

“No,” he interjected.

“Then you have a very poor opinion of them all. Isn’t there an exception?”

He grinned insolently, and, with that brutal audacity he used as a weapon:

“Those who are present are always excepted.”

She blushed a little, but asked very composedly:

“What do you think of me?”

“I think you have much practical good sense, and that you certainly can keep your hand hidden, make fools of people, set your traps, and that you are patiently waiting to see how things are going to turn out.”

“Is that all?”

“That’s all.”

“I’ll make you change that last opinion.”

She went toward her mother, who was walking with Saval, apparently holding a conversation of a very tender nature. Idly making figures in the sand, she was speaking, without looking at him, but holding his arm, and closely pressed to him. Yvette observed her mother a few seconds, and a vague doubt shot through her mind, as does the shadow of a cloud pushed along by the wind.

The bell for luncheon rang.

The meal was silent and mournful.

A storm was brewing. Big clouds seemed to be ambushed in the horizon; they were mute, but thick, and apparently full of tempest.

After the coffee had been served, the Marquise asked:

"Are you going to take a walk with your friend, Servigny? Fine weather for a stroll in the woods."

After casting a rapid glance at her mother, she answered:

"I'm not going out to-day."

The Marquise appeared annoyed, and insisted:

"It would be healthful for you, child."

Then Yvette almost blurted:

"I told why I am staying home, the other night."

Madame Obardi had forgotten it, in her eagerness to remain alone with Saval. She blushed, was troubled, and fearful lest she would not get a chance to be alone with her friend. She mumbled:

"That's true; I had forgotten it."

Yvette began to do some embroidery work. The men smoked. The Marquise, very much irritated, eyed Saval pitifully, and racked brains to find a pretext to get her daughter out of the way. When she had to realize that she could not succeed, she said to Servigny:

"If you stay overnight, we'll all go to-morrow to Chatou, and have lunch at the Fournaise."

He understood, smiled, and bowed:

"With the greatest of pleasure, Marquise."

The day passed slowly and painfully, constantly threatened by the storm.

Supper time came, at last. The sky was heavy with slow and large clouds. Not a breath of air.

This meal was also silent. A certain uneasy feeling, a vague fear, seemed to render all taciturn.

They remained on the terrace after supper; the

conversation was ever languishing. Night was about to fall, and gave promise to continue the torture of that day's crushing and smothering heat. Suddenly the horizon was rent asunder by a fiery hook, and their faces were illuminated, for a few seconds, by a dazzling light. Then a peal of thunder broke the silence, and the heat became doubly oppressing.

Yvette rose, saying:

"I am going to retire; the storm has made me nervous."

After bidding every one good night, she went away.

As her room was just above the terrace, its light lit up the chestnut tree in front of it, and her shadow could be seen on a green background. But, soon all was dark again. Madame Obardi heaved a sigh of relief.

"My daughter's gone to bed."

Servigny said:

"I shall do the same, with your permission, Marquise."

He kissed her hand, and likewise disappeared.

She remained alone with Saval, in the dead of night.

Instantly, she was in his arms, pressing him to her, and embracing him. In spite of his protestations, she kneeled down before him, and murmured:

"I want to look at you in the flashes of lightning."

But, as soon as her candle was out, Yvette, tortured by a painful and confused suspicion, went barefooted to the railing, and listened.

She could see nothing, as she was above them, on the very roof of the terrace itself.

All she could hear was a confused murmur of voices; her heart beat so hard that it filled the ear with noises. A window was just being shut. Servigny must have also retired. Her mother was then alone with the other.

A second flash, dividing the sky in two for a fraction of a second, gave her a glimpse of the landscape which she knew so well; and she saw the large river, the exact color of molten lead, just as one dreams of fantastic streams. An instant later, a voice under her said: "I love you."

She heard no more. A strange shiver went through her body, and her mind was all in a whirl.

A dead silence seemed to hover over the country. She could hardly breathe, oppressed as she was by something unknown and horrible. Another fiery thread enflamed the sky, and lit up the horizon, immediately followed by another one, and many others still.

The voice which had been heard a few minutes before repeated in louder tones: "Oh, how I love you! How I love you!" And Yvette knew the voice well; it was her mother's.

A drop of lukewarm water fell on her forehead, and a barely perceptible agitation took place among the leaves; thus was announced the coming rain.

Then the water was on all sides of her, covering and sprinkled her, as in a shower-bath. She did not move, she was absorbed in what was going on below.

She heard them get up and go to their rooms. Doors were closed inside the house; the young girl then, seized by an irresistible desire to know, a desire that tortured and maddened her, rushed down the stairs, opened the door leading to the lawn,

which she crossed under a torrent of rain, and hid herself behind a pillar, to watch the windows.

Only one was lit up—that of her mother. Suddenly two shadows, close together, appeared in the illuminated square. They soon were but one; and the lightning, coming to her aid, made her see them, arms around each other's neck, take a long embrace.

Losing mastery of herself, and unconscious of everything, she cried at the top of her voice, made shrill by her emotion: "Mother!"

Her desperate cry was lost in the noise of the falling rain, but the couple, nevertheless, separated, somewhat anxious. One of the shadows disappeared, while the other sought to detect something in the gloomy darkness of the garden.

Then, afraid of being found out and meeting her mother, Yvette rushed into the house, up the stairs, upon the steps of which she left a trail of water, and locked herself in her room, resolved to open to no one.

Without taking off her dress, dripping wet, she fell on her knees, and implored, in her distress, some superhuman protection, that mysterious succor of the heavens, that unknown aid which we all clamor for in moments of despair.

She remained in this same position for a long while, so long that the storm disappeared without her noticing it. It stopped raining, and a sweet, odorous, delicious coolness from the moistened leaves and grass came in through the open window.

Yvette rose, undressed mechanically, went to bed. She watched, with fixed eyes, the day dawn, wept, and pondered.

Her mother had a lover! What a disgrace!

But she had read so many novels in which women, even mothers, had erred and fallen, only to rise to honor again, at the *dénouement*, that she was not astonished beyond all bounds to find herself in a situation similar to that of many novels. The violence of her first sorrow, the bewilderment of the surprise, were gradually becoming attenuated in the remembrance of analogous affairs which had already been suggested to her by her readings.

She said to herself:

“ I shall save my mother.”

This resolution, worthy of a heroine, restored her serenity, and she felt herself strong and ready for the fray and all necessary sacrifices. Now, she thought of the means she must employ. Only one expedient seemed good and in accordance with her romantic nature. And she worked herself up, as an actor does for a scene, for the conversation in which she would engage with her mother.

The sun had risen. The servants were busily active about the house. The chambermaid brought her a cup of chocolate, which Yvette had her put on the table.

“ Tell my mother that I don’t feel well,” said she; “ that I shall stay in bed until the departure of the guests; that I couldn’t sleep last night, and that I’d like to be left alone, because I should like to rest, if I could.”

The servant, somewhat astonished, looked at the dress, still wet, and thrown on a carpet like a cast-away rag.

“ Did Mademoiselle go out? ” said she.

“ Yes, I took a walk in the rain, to enjoy the coolness.”

And Yvette waited, for she knew her mother would come.

The Marquise jumped out of bed, and went to her daughter, after hearing the servant's message, for a slight suspicion had taken hold of her, since she had heard that cry of "Mother!"

"What's the matter with you?" said she.

Yvette looked at her, and stammered:

"I—I——"

Then, overcome by a sudden and terrible emotion, she began to gasp.

The Marquise was astonished.

"What is the matter with you?"

The young girl forgot all her plans and carefully prepared phrases, hid her face in her hands, and stuttered:

"Oh, mother! Oh, mother!"

Madame Obardi stood there before her, far too moved to understand completely, though she guessed almost everything, with that subtle instinct which constituted her greatest strength.

As Yvette could not speak, suffocated by her tears, her mother, finally irritated and feeling that the explanation which she had always avoided was no longer to be shunned, said roughly:

"Will you, or will you not, tell me what ails you?"

Yvette could hardly articulate:

"Last night—I saw—your window."

The Marquise turned pale.

"What?"

Her daughter sobbed, unable to say anything else but:

"Oh, mother! Oh, mother!"

The Marquise, whose fears and embarrassment

were changing to anger, shrugged her shoulders, and prepared to go away.

"I really think you're crazy. When it's all over, tell me."

But the young girl suddenly uncovered her face, moistened by her tears, and said:

"No, listen—I must speak to you. Listen. Promise . . . we'll go away together, very far, to some country place; we'll live like two peasants; no one will know what became of us. Do, mother, please do; I beg you, I beseech you."

The Marquise was speechless, remained dumfounded in the middle of the room. She had common blood in her veins, easily excited. Then, a sentiment of shame, of a guilty mother, mixed with a certain vague sentiment of fear and exasperation of a passionate woman whose love is threatened, made her shudder, ready to beg forgiveness or commit an act of violence.

"I don't understand you," said she.

Yvette went on:

"I saw you . . . mother . . . last night. You mustn't any more . . . if you only knew . . . we shall go away, together . . . just the both . . . I'll love you so much you'll forget."

Madame Obardi said, in a trembling voice:

"Listen, girlie, there are things which you don't understand yet. Don't forget . . . don't forget . . . that I forbid you . . . to speak to me . . . of . . . of . . . such things."

But the young girl, suddenly resuming her rôle of rescuer, which she had imposed upon herself, said:

"No, mother; I am no longer a child, and I have the right to know. Now, I know that we receive

people of bad reputation, adventurers, and that, for this very reason, we are not respected. I know still more. That must no longer be, do you hear? I don't want it. We are going to go away. You'll sell your jewelry; we'll work, if needs be, and we'll live as honest women, somewhere, far away from here. And, if I am lucky enough to get married, so much the better."

Her mother looked at her with her dark eyes, evidently showing irritation. She answered:

"You are not in your senses. You will kindly do me the favor to get up and take your lunch with the rest of us."

"No, mother. There is some one whom I will never see again. You understand me. Either he or I will leave. Choose between us."

She was sitting up on the bed, and gradually raising her voice, speaking as if on the stage, thoroughly imbued with the atmosphere of the drama which she had imagined to herself, almost forgetting her sorrow, only to better remember her mission.

The Marquise, altogether stupefied, repeated again:

"But you are crazy."

That was all she could think, on the spur of the moment.

Yvette answered, in her most energetic and theatrical manner:

"No, mother; this man will leave the house, or I will; for I will not surrender."

"And where will you go . . . what will you do?"

"I do not know, I do not care—I want us both to be honest women."

.

These ever-recurring words, "honest women," angered her mother, who shouted to her:

"Keep still! I shall not allow you to speak to me like that. I am as good as another, do you understand? I am a courtesan, and I am proud of it; the so-called honest women are not half as good as I am."

Yvette, thoroughly discouraged, stammered:

"Oh, mother!"

The Marquise, who was now worked up to a high pitch, cried:

"Yes, yes, I am a courtesan. What of it? If I wasn't a courtesan, you'd be a cook, as I was, and you'd be working for thirty cents a day, washing dishes, and running errands to the butcher's, and fearing your mistress's bad humor, while now you are living in luxurious idleness. When you are only a mere servant, with fifty francs saved up, you must know how to shift for yourself; and there is only one alternative for a servant—only one—do you hear! We are not able to save money with such wages. We only have our body; yes, only our body."

She beat her breast as a penitent in the act of confessing, and, agitated and flushed, she advanced, like a demon, toward the bed.

"When one is a beautiful girl, one must live on that beauty—or starve—there is no choice."

Then, coming back again to her original idea, she added:

"Yes, the honest women deprive themselves of us. They are the worthless creatures, because they are not driven to this life by necessity. They have all they need, and more besides; and yet they are not faithful. They are the abominable creatures."

The Marquise then stopped, seeing her daughter so miserable; and she became sad, remorseful, and moved to such pity that she opened her arms, threw them around her daughter, and sobbed:

“ My poor little one, if you only knew how you hurt me.”

They both wept, for a long time.

The Marquise, who could not remain melancholy for any length of time, rose and broke away softly from her daughter's embrace.

She spoke very low, now:

“ That's how it is, my dear; it can't be helped. You must take life as it comes.”

Yvette kept on crying. The shock had been too sudden for her to recover her senses quickly.

The Marquise continued:

“ Come, dress, and come down to lunch, so that no one will notice anything.”

The young girl nodded to the negative; she could not speak; finally, she managed to sob out an answer:

“ No, mother, you know what I told you. I shall not change my mind. I will not go out of my room till they have gone away. I don't want to see any more of those people. If they return, you'll never see me again.”

The Marquise had already dried her tears, and, tired from the emotions of that day, murmured faintly:

“ Be good, now. Don't be unreasonable.”

But, after a moment's silence, she said:

“ Yes, it's better for you to rest this morning. I shall come up to see you this afternoon.”

Thoroughly serene now, she kissed her daughter on the forehead, and went away.

As soon as her mother had disappeared, Yvette locked her door, in order to be alone and think about what she was really to do next.

About eleven o'clock the chambermaid knocked at her door, and asked:

"The Marquise, your mother, would like to know if mademoiselle wishes anything, and what would she like to have for lunch?"

Yvette answered:

"I'm not hungry. All I want is to be left alone."

And she stayed in bed as if she were very sick.

At about three some one knocked again. She asked:

"Who's there?"

It was her mother's voice.

"Your mother, dearie; I came to see how you were getting along."

The Marquise approached her, as one would a convalescent:

"Well, do you feel better? Would you like to eat an egg?"

"Nothing, thank you."

The Marquise sat on the edge of the bed. They remained silent for a while, but the Marquise, seeing her daughter gave no sign of speaking or moving, said to her:

"Aren't you going to get up?"

Yvette answered:

"Yes, in a little while."

Then she said gravely:

"I have thought it over a great deal, mother, and here is—here is my resolution. The past is the past, and let us forget it. But the future will be different—or else—or else, I know what I

should do. Now, just let this be the last of this subject."

The Marquise, who thought the subject had been threshed out before this, felt herself becoming impatient. This was really too much. This big fool of a girl ought to have understood, a long time ago. But she did not answer anything, and repeated:

"Are you going to dress?"

"Yes, I am ready."

Her mother took the place of her chambermaid, brought her her stockings, corset, and skirts; then she kissed her.

"Do you want to take a walk before supper?"

"Yes, mother."

And they strolled along the bank of the river, only speaking very ordinary things.



CHAPTER IV

THE LAST STRUGGLE



EARLY the next morning, Yvette went to sit alone where Servigny read the story of the ants' life to her. She said to herself:

"I shall not leave this place before I've resolved to do something definite."

She soon had studied the situation in all its phases.

What would she do, if her mother refused to accept her conditions, and did not give up her life, acquaintances, everything, to go and hide away, with her, from the world, in some far distant land?

She could leave alone—flee. But where? How? How could she live?

By working? At what? Who would give her work? But then, the humble, mournful life of the working girl seemed a little disgraceful to her. She thought of becoming a teacher in a private family, like the heroines in certain novels, and of being loved by the eldest son. But for that she ought to

have been of a good family, so that she might have been able to answer the exasperated father, in a proud voice:

“ I am Yvette Obardi.”

That was impossible. Besides, it was too old a scheme.

The idea of entering a convent was no better. She felt no special vocation for a religious life, as her compassion was never more than fleeting and intermittent. No one could save her by marriage, being what she was. There was no possible issue, no definite resource.

Besides, she wanted to do something great, noble, really strong-minded; she thought of suicide.

She decided upon this, quite calmly, as if she were going to take a trip, without reflecting, without really seeing Death, understanding that it was the end, and no chance of starting over again, the departure without a return, the eternal adieu to this earth.

She was immediately in favor of this extreme, with the light-heartedness of a young, exalted soul.

But now it was a question of choosing the method. They all seemed painful, riskful, and requiring a violent act which was most repugnant to her.

She very quickly set aside the dagger and revolver, that often merely wound and disfigure, and require too much familiarity with their use—the cord, as being common, a pauper’s expedient, ridiculous, and ugly. Poison was the next one suggested, but which? Almost all provoke suffering and have more or less of an emetic effect. Then, she thought of chloroform, because she had read of how it had been used to force a girl to asphyxiate herself.

She experienced a sort of proud, intimate, and

joyful sentiment at this resolution. They would all learn what she was, and what was her character.

She went to Bougival, where she stopped at the druggist's to buy some chloroform for a toothache, as she intimated. The man knew her well, so gave it to her without hesitating.

Then she went to Croissy, where she obtained another flask of the narcotic; to Chatou, for a third; to Rueil, for a fourth; she came home late for luncheon. Her appetite being roused by this errand, she ate heartily, like a person who has indulged in much physical exercise.

Her mother was happy to see her so hungry, and was greatly quieted. She announced, at the table:

"All our friends are coming over to spend Sunday with us. I have invited the Prince, the Chevalier, Monsieur de Belvigne."

Yvette grew slightly pale, but answered nothing.

She went out immediately after lunch—went to the station, and took a ticket for Paris.

That whole afternoon was spent in going from one pharmacy to the other to buy a few drops of chloroform.

That evening she returned home with her pockets full of these small bottles.

She did the same the next day, and, by some hazard, was able to obtain from one apothecary a half a quart of the liquid.

Saturday she stayed home; it was a heavy, warm day; she spent the whole of it on a steamer chair, on the terrace.

Being thoroughly resolved to accomplish her act, her mind was now perfectly at ease.

The next day she put on a beautiful blue gown,

which became her very well, for she wanted to be pretty.

While she was contemplating herself in the mirror, she said, suddenly:

“To-morrow I’ll be dead.” A peculiar shudder ran through her body. “Dead! I shall speak no more, nor think, nor will any one see me again. And I never shall see the world again, either.”

She looked at herself for a long time, her face especially, as one who had never seen it before. She examined her eyes, discovered a thousand things in them which she ignored before; was astonished to find a hidden trait in her face which she was unconscious of possessing; and generally treated herself like an old friend one had not seen for some time.

She said to herself:

“Yes, it is I; my reflection in that mirror. How strange to see one’s self. Without the looking-glass, we should never know ourselves. Everybody else would but ourselves.”

She drew both her large tresses over her breast, following, with her eye, all her motions, poses, even gestures.

“How pretty I am!” she thought. “To-morrow I’ll be dead, over there, on my bed.”

She threw a glance at her bed, imagined that she saw herself stretched on it, whiter than the sheets themselves.

“Dead. In a week this face, these eyes, these cheeks, will be but a piece of rottenness, in a box, down in the earth.”

A terrible sentiment of anguish hung over her heart.

The clear sun fell in large rays over the coun-

try, and the sweet morning air came in through the window.

She sat down, and repeated to herself: "Dead." It was as if the world was going to disappear for her; but no; nothing would be changed in this world, not even in her own room. Yes, her room would remain the same, as would the bed, the chairs, the dressing-table, though she would be gone, and no one would be sad even, except her mother, perhaps.

People would say: "How pretty that little Yvette was!" and that's all. And while she looked at her hand, leaning on the arm of the armchair, she thought again of the fate of her pretty skin and flesh. This time a long shiver of horror ran through the whole of her body, and she could not bring herself to understand how she could disappear alone—without the earth doing so, too, so much did she think herself a part of it—of this country, of the air, of the sun, of life itself.

Peals of laughter, voices, calls, that noisy gaiety of week-end parties, at the outset of the reception, were heard, and she recognized the strong voice of M. de Belvigne, who had just started a song.

She rose, unthinkingly, and went to see. All applauded. They were there, all five, with two other gentlemen, whom she did not know.

She stepped back quickly, at the thought that these men were coming to amuse themselves at her mother's, a courtesan.

The bell for luncheon rang.

"I'll teach them how to die," said she.

She went down, with a firm step, something of the resolution of the Christian martyrs entering the arena where the lions were awaiting them.

She shook hands with every one, affably, though haughtily. Servigny asked her:

“Are you less cranky, Mam’zelle, to-day?”

She answered in a severe and singular manner:

“To-day I am in my Paris humor. I want to do all sorts of foolish things. Look out.”

Then, turning toward Belvigne:

“You’ll be my victim, Malvoisie. I am going to take you all to the fair at Marly.”

There was really a fair at Marly. The newcomers were introduced—the Count Tamine and Marquis de Briguetot.

Yvette was silent during the repast, saving her energy and gaiety so that no one would guess what was going to take place, everybody would be the more surprised. “Who would have thought it? She seemed so happy, so contented!”

She tried not to think of the evening, when they would all be on the terrace; this was the time she had chosen.

She drank as much wine as she could, and two glasses of fine champagne; so that she was slightly flushed, feverish, both in body and mind, and ready to do anything.

“Ready, set, march,” said she.

She took De Belvigne’s arm, and set the pace for the others, whom she addressed:

“Come, now, you’ll be my escort. Servigny, you are sergeant; you go to the right. Then, you’ll put in front the strangers’ guard, the two exotics, the Prince and Chevalier, next the two recruits, who start to-day. March!”

They were off. Servigny began to imitate the bugle, while the newcomers imitated the drum. M. de Belvigne, slightly abashed, said:

"Ah, Mlle. Yvette, be reasonable; you'll compromise yourself."

She answered:

"It's you I'm compromising, Raisiné. I don't care, personally. There'll be nothing of it to-morrow. Sorry, but then you mustn't go out with such girls."

They stupefied the strollers in Bougival. Everybody turned around; the inhabitants came to the door; the passengers on the train from Rueil to Marly hissed them; the men on top of the trains shouted:

"Throw them in the water—in the water."

Yvette walked like a regular soldier, dragging Belvigne by the arm. She did not smile, but kept serious, a sort of sinister immobility in her face. Servigny interrupted his bugle to shout commands. The Prince and the Chevalier were much amused. The two young men played the drum uninterruptedly.

They created a sensation at the fair. Women applauded; young men mocked them; a stout gentleman, with a touch of enviousness in his voice, said:

"There are some who are certainly not bored to death."

The young girl caught a glimpse of a merry-go-round, and she forced Belvigne to mount one of the horses nearest hers, while the rest scrambled for an animal. She kept Belvigne on for five rides, much to the bystanders' amusement. He was pale and almost seasick when he got off.

Then she meandered all over. She made the men weigh themselves, among a host of spectators, and buy ridiculous toys, which they were obliged to

carry in their arms wherever they went. The Prince and Chevalier were beginning to think that the diversion was going too far. Servigny and the two young men went on undaunted.

They arrived at the bank of the river, where Yvette had a strange fancy.

“Let him who loves me jump in,” said she.

No one did. A crowd gathered. The women were stupefied, the men sarcastic.

She repeated:

“Then, there isn’t one of you capable of jumping in for my sake.”

Servigny murmured:

“The deuce!”

And he dashed in the river.

His splash sent drops of water up on Yvette’s feet. An astonished murmur of gayety was emitted by all.

Then, the young girl picked up a piece of wood, threw it in the water, and cried:

“Bring it to me!”

The young man swam after it, brought it back in his mouth, and presented it to her like a dog.

“Good doggie,” said she, giving him a pat on the head.

A stout lady was indignant.

“Stupid!” said she.

Another added:

“Ridiculous!”

A man rejoined:

“Watch me jump in a river for a woman.”

She took Belvigne by the arm, saying:

“You missed your chance.”

They came back. The gazers irritated her, and she remarked:

"How stupid all these people look!"

Staring at de Belvigne, she continued:

"You, too."

M. de Belvigne bowed. She noticed that the Prince and Chevalier had disappeared. Servigny, mournful and dripping wet, was taciturn, and the other two were also mute.

She laughed dryly.

"You have enough, it seems. That's what you call having great fun, isn't it? You came for that; I gave you your money's worth."

She, too, walked silently; but suddenly Belvigne noticed that she was crying. Moved himself, he inquired:

"What's the matter?"

She murmured:

"Leave me alone; it's none of your business."

But, like a fool, he insisted:

"Oh, Mademoiselle, what is it? Has some one hurt you?"

She repeated, impatiently:

"Keep still!"

Then, no longer able to control herself, she burst into tears.

She shook throughout her body, so violent were her sobs, seemingly choked and suffocated by them.

Belvigne was at a loss as to what to do, repeating:

"I don't know what to do."

Servigny advanced.

"Let's go back, Mam'zelle. Don't let any one see you weeping. Why do you do such foolish things, if they make you sad?"

And he dragged her home gently, where she

broke away from him, and locked herself in her room.

She reappeared at dinner, very pale and serious. Every one was happy, though. Sérvigny was dressed as a workman, and spoke just like one throughout the whole meal; his slang kept every one hilarious.

Yvette was anxious to arrive at the end of the supper, feeling her courage wane. Immediately after the coffee had been served, she retired.

She heard joyous voices under her. The chevalier was trying to amuse the company.

She listened to it all. Servigny, slightly gay himself, imitated the drunken workman; called the Marquise the boss, and, all of a sudden said to Saval:

“ Hey, boss! ”

All joined in a fit of laughter.

Yvette was not decided. She first took out a sheet of paper, and wrote:

“ BOUGIVAL, Sunday, 9 p. m.

“ I died so as not to become a courtesan.”

Then, in post-script:

“ Adieu, dear mother, forgive me.”

She sealed the envelope and wrote her mother's name on it.

Then she placed her long chair near the window, and a table with the bottle of chloroform upon it.

Yvette was saying to herself:

“ I am going to die. I'm going to die.” Her heart seemed to be about to burst, so violently did she sob, although she tried desperately not to. She

felt, for a moment, the need of being saved and loved. .

Servigny's voice came up to her. He was telling stories which made every one laugh. The Marquise seemed the happiest. She repeated all the time:

“ Oh, how comical! How comical! ”

Yvette poured some chloroform on a piece of cotton. A powerful, sweet, strange odor filled the room; she approached the wet cotton to her lips, and inhaled the fumes in long draughts.

At first, it seemed to her that her lungs were becoming inflated, and that her soul, heavy with grief a little while ago, was becoming light, as if the weight that had oppressed her had taken flight.

An agreeable sensation took hold of her, and she felt herself rocked by a light fever into a sea of gentle dizziness.

She noticed that the cotton was dry, and was astonished not to have died yet. Her senses seemed to be more acute, subtle, alert.

Not a word that was said below escaped her ears. Prince Kravalow was telling how he killed in a duel an Austrian general.

She again moistened the cotton, and inhaled more of the fumes. For a few instants, she felt nothing; then the former sensation of comfort seized her again.

Twice she repeated this manœuvre, for she was coming to like this physical and moral sensation of torpor, in which her soul wandered happily, as it were.

It seemed to her that she had neither bones, nor flesh, nor limbs. They must have been taken away without her noticing it. The chloroform had emptied her body, leaving only her thinking powers more

awake and keener than she ever had known them to be.

She remembered a thousand things, details of her childhood, little nothings that pleased her. Her mind, suddenly become most active, touched upon ideas of the most different nature; meandered through the past, and lost itself in former future hopes. Her thought gave her a sensual pleasure. She was under the charm of a divine happiness. She was sinking and disappearing in a sort of strange fairyland.

She was on a large boat that passed by a country deluged with flowers. She saw people on the shore, who spoke very loud, and then she was on land again, she knew not how; Sérvigny, as a prince, came to escort her to a bull-fight.

Then everything became vague.

Finally, she woke up, deliciously benumbed, and had some difficulty to remember where she was.

She was not dead yet.

She was so happy, so comfortable, she was not all in a hurry to put an end to this wellbeing! She would have liked to prolong the duration of the present sensation.

She breathed slowly, and watched the moon, in front of her, beyond the trees. Something was changed in her mind. She thought differently. The chloroform, in deadening her body and soul, had calmed her sufferings, and weakened her wish to die.

Why should she not live? Why should she not be loved? Be happy? Everything was possible and easy, now. Everything in life was good and charming. But, as she wanted to dream as long as possible, she used some more of the liquid, but this

time with the precautions of avoiding the poisoning effect of the drug.

She gazed at the moon, and saw a face in it, that of a woman. She was in the same state as if she had absorbed opium. This face was swinging to and fro in the heavens; it sang, sang, with a well-known voice, the *Alleluia d'Amour*.

It was the Marquise, who had just gone to the piano.

Yvette had wings now. She flew, on a beautiful, clear night, above woods and rivers. She rolled herself in the air, that caressed her body, and went at such a speed that she saw nothing under her; and then, she found herself fishing in a lake.

Something resisted, but she pulled so hard that she finally drew a beautiful pearl necklace, which she had wanted for ever so long a time. She was not astonished at this, for she saw Servigny, who was on the other bank, just drawing out of the water a wooden horse.

Then she felt herself awakening again, and heard some one calling her.

Her mother was saying:

“Put out your candle.”

Servigny repeated comically:

“Put out your candle, Mam’zelle Yvette.”

They all repeated it in a chorus:

“Mam’zelle Yvette, put out your candle.”

She again poured the liquid in the cotton, and breathed the odor, though she took care to escape the mortal properties it might contain. She then took an abandoned position, as if dead, and waited, for she knew that they were going to come up and see what was the matter.

The Marquise was saying:

"I'm rather anxious. That little fool went asleep without putting out her candle. I'll send Clémence to put it out and shut the window."

Soon the chambermaid knocked at the door.

"Mademoiselle, Mademoiselle."

After a moment's silence, she said:

"Madame la Marquise, your mother, wants you to put out the candle, and shut the window."

Clémence waited a while, and repeated:

"Mademoiselle, Mademoiselle!"

As she did not answer, the servant went to the Marquise, and said:

"Mademoiselle must be asleep; she has locked herself up, and cannot be awakened."

Madame Obardi at once replied:

"But she shall not stay like that."

Then Servigny suggested that they all shout together: "Hip—hip—hurrah—Mam'zelle Yvette!"

As Yvette did not answer, the Marquise said:

"I hope nothing has happened; I'm growing anxious."

Servigny picked a few roses, and threw them into her room, by the open window.

The first one almost made her jump and cry out. But the others fell upon, around her, without her moving.

The Marquise shouted in a choked voice:

"Yvette, why don't you answer?"

Servigny declared:

"That's not natural. I'm going to climb up to the balcony."

The Chevalier became indignant.

"Here, here, that's a favor which I wish to claim for myself; that would be too much of an advantage over us—to obtain a—rendezvous."

The others, who thought it was a prank on the young girl's part, cried:

"We protest. It's a put-up game."

But the Marquise, who was anxious, repeated:

"Still, we'll have to see what's the matter."

The Prince declared dramatically:

"She favors the Duke; we are betrayed."

"Let's toss up," said the Chevalier.

He drew a hundred-franc piece. He began with the Prince.

"Tails," said he.

It was a head.

The Prince threw the coin, and said to Saval in turn:

"Call, sir."

Saval called heads.

It was a tail.

The Prince, with the others, likewise.

Servigny declared insolently:

"Oh, he cheats!"

The Russian protested and gave the piece to Servigny, who threw it up, crying:

"Heads!"

It was the reverse.

He bowed, indicated the pillar, and said:

"Go up, Prince."

But the Prince looked around, apparently worried.

"What are you looking for?" said the Chevalier.

"I should like—a—a—ladder."

A peal of laughter broke forth. Saval advanced, saying:

"We'll help you."

He took him in his giant's arms, suggesting:

“ Hang on to the balcony.”

He did so, and remained suspended, kicking desperately in the air.

Then Servigny pulled on his legs and dragged him down.

“ Whose turn? ” he asked.

“ Come, Belvigne, a little courage.”

“ I like my bones too well.”

“ Chevalier, you ought to be able to climb.”

“ You may take my place, Duke.”

“ Hm-m, hm-m, I don't know that I'm over eager . . . ”

At the same time Servigny was turning around the pillar.

Then with a leap he obtained a good hold on the balcony, raised himself, and jumped over the railing.

All applauded. But he reappeared instantly, crying:

“ Come quickly. Yvette is unconscious.”

The daughter of the Marquise was pretending to be dead. Madame Obardi, affrighted, threw her arms about her.

“ What's the matter with her? What's the matter with her, say? ” she stuttered.

Servigny picked the bottle of chloroform from the floor:

“ She's asphyxiated.”

He listened to her heart, and added:

“ But she's not dead; we'll revive her. Get some ammonia.”

The chambermaid, in her agitation, could not understand, repeated:

“ What, sir? What, sir? What? ”

“ Sedative water? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ Bring it immediately, and let some air in. Open the door!”

The Marquise was on her knees, sobbing.

“ Yvette, my daughter, my precious one, listen to me. Answer, Yvette, my child. Oh! what’s the matter with her?”

The men, thoroughly beside themselves, moved around, doing nothing of any use, except bringing towels, water, and vinegar.

Some one said: “ Undress her.”

The Marquise, almost unconscious of her acts, tried to do so, but she was unable to. Her hands trembled, got mixed up in the girl’s garments, and she groaned:

“ I cannot, I cannot.”

The servant came in the room bringing the sedative water, which Servigny poured into a handkerchief, then put it under Yvette’s nose, and she almost suffocated.

“ She’s breathing,” said he. “ It will not amount to anything.”

The chambermaid having undressed her, he carried her to the bed.

When she was placed in it comfortably, he rose very pale.

“ She’ll come to in a little while,” said he. For he had heard her breathing normally. But, seeing the men eagerly staring at her, a jealous irritation prompted him to say:

“ Gentlemen, there are too many of us in here; leave the Marquise, Saval, and me to take care of Yvette.”

He spoke with a dry air of authority. The others went out immediately.

Madame Obardi threw herself into her lover's arms, and said:

"Save her! . . . save her!"

Servigny at that moment caught a glimpse of the letter, which he seized rapidly, feeling instinctively that the Marquise ought not to see it.

He read its contents.

"That's curious. It needs thought!"

He hid the letter in his pocket.

Then it struck him that the young woman was better, but she was ashamed to show it, fearing to be questioned.

The Marquise was on her knees, near the foot of the bed, and was weeping. All of a sudden she cried: "She needs a doctor!"

But Servigny, who had just said a few words to Saval, answered: "Just leave her a minute with me, and she will kiss you when you return." The Baron took her away.

Servigny sat near her, and said: "Mam'zelle Yvette, listen to me. . . ."

She did not answer. She felt so comfortable in her bed that she never wished to move again. She had never been so comfortable.

The warm air came in through the window in light breezes, and whisked over her face in an imperceptible and exquisite manner. It was a caress, something like a kiss of the wind, or the breath of a fan, made up of the leaves and trees of the woods, the shadows of the night, and the vapor of the rivers, and of the flowers, too, for the roses, thrown in the room, mingled their sweet and healthful odor.

And she drank this air in long draughts, no longer desirous to die, but possessed of a strong

will to live, be happy, above all, to be loved, yes, loved.

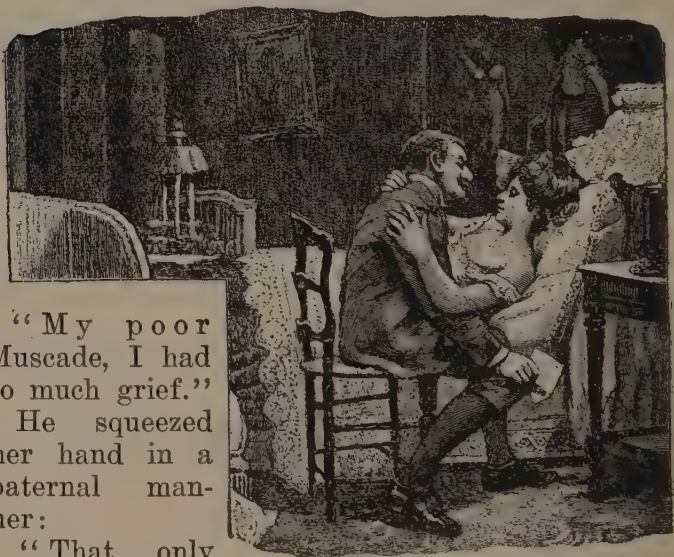
Servigny reiterated:

“Mam’zelle Yvette, please listen.”

She finally decided to open her eyes. He continued, seeing she was revived:

“Why such foolish, rash acts?”

She murmured:



“My poor Muscade, I had so much grief.”

He squeezed her hand in a paternal manner:

“That only made matters worse. Now, promise never to try it again.”

She did not answer, but she made a movement to smile, which was more to be felt, by the nod of her head, than seen.

He pulled out the letter he had found on the table.

“Must your mother see this?”

She shook her head.

He did not know what else to say, for the situation seemed to be without an issue. He murmured:

“ You must put up with terrible things in this world. I understand your grief, and I promise . . . ”

She stammered:

“ You are too good. . . . ”

They were silent. He was looking at her. She seemed to be moved to tenderness; and suddenly she opened both her arms, as if to attract him toward her. He bent over her, feeling she was calling him; their lips were united.

They remained thus for a long time. But he felt he was losing control of himself, so rose for a few seconds. She smiled tenderly at him now; and, with her two arms clasped on his shoulders, she brought him back.

“ I’m going to call your mother,” said he.

After another silence, she said so low that he hardly heard her:

“ You’ll love me sincerely? ”

He kneeled before the bed, and, kissing her wrist, said:

“ I adore you.”

But some one was near the door. He leaped up and said, in his ordinary voice, which always seemed slightly ironical:

“ You can come in now. It’s all over now.”

The Marquise opened wide her arms and frantically embraced her daughter, whose face she moistened with her tears, while the radiant Servigny went to the window to breathe some fresh air, humming to himself the famous song from *Rigoletto*, *La donna e mobile*.



THE MOUNT OF OLIVES



WHEN the men of the small port of Garandou, in the Bay of Pisca, between Marseilles and Toulon, in Provence, saw the boat of the Abbé Vilbois returning from his fishing expedition, they came down to the beach to help him draw his boat on shore.

The abbé was alone in it and he was rowing like a true mariner, with rare energy, in spite of his fifty-eight years. With his sleeves rolled up over his muscular arms, his cassock drawn up between his knees, and some buttons open over his breast, his three-cornered hat on the bench beside him, and a white bell-shaped hat on his head, he looked like a substantial but curious ecclesiastic of the southern countries, made for adventures rather than for saying mass.

From time to time he looked behind to gauge the point of landing, and then continued to row, with

strong, rhythmic and methodic strokes, to demonstrate once again to these poor sailors of the Midi how the men from the North swim.

The boat, urged forward by his oars, finally touched the sand and glided over it as if to trace a line upon the beach with its keel; then it stopped short, and the five men who were watching the *curé*, approached, evidently well pleased to see him back.

"Well, Monsieur le *curé*, have you had good luck?" asked one with a strong Provençal accent.

The Abbé Vilbois drew in his oars, took off his bell-shaped hat and put on his three-cornered one, rolled down his sleeves, buttoned his cassock, and having thus resumed his wonted bearing and appearance of village priest, he replied proudly:

"Yes, very good, three red-snappers, two eels and some sunfish."

The five fishermen, hanging over the edge of the boat, critically examined the dead fish, the fat snappers, the flat-headed eels, hideous sea-serpents, and the violet sunfish, with zigzag golden and orange-colored stripes.

"I will carry them to your house, Monsieur le *curé*," said one of the men.

"Thank you, my good fellow," replied the *curé*.

Having shaken them all by the hand, the *curé* set out for his home, followed by one of the men and leaving the others to look after his boat.

He walked with long, slow stride, with an air of strength and dignity. Being still heated with the exertion of his rowing, he now and again took off his hat when passing under the light shadow of the olive trees, exposing to the warm evening air, that was slightly fanned by a breeze from the sea, his square forehead framed in by his straight, close-cut

hair, the forehead of an officer rather than of a priest. The village in front of them was on an elevation in the middle of a large valley sloping down to the sea.

It was an evening in July. The brilliant sun had almost reached the serried summits of the distant hills, and the lengthening shadow of the ecclesiastic, enveloped in dust, fell upon the white road, while the immense three-cornered hat appeared like a black spot in the neighboring field, climbing from olive tree to olive tree and then jumping down on the ground between the trees.

The abbé's feet raised a cloud of fine dust, that impalpable flour which covers in summer all the roads in the Provence. It whirled about his cassock, covering it around the bottom with a strip of gray. Refreshed by his walk, he was now striding along, with his hands in his pockets, and the slow, strong step of a mountaineer. His calm eyes looked at his village, where he had been *curé* for twenty years. This village, chosen by him, had been obtained as an especial favor, and he hoped to die there. His church rose above the houses clustered around it. Its two towers of brown stone, square and irregular, which reared their silhouettes up out of this lovely valley of the Midi, seemed more like the defenses of a strong castle than the belfries of a sacred building.

The abbé was content because he had caught three red-snappers, two eels, and five sunfish.

He would have this new little triumph before his parishioners, who respected him perhaps because he was the best developed man in that country, in spite of his age. These innocent little vanities were his greatest pleasure. He could cut the stems of flowers with his pistol; he sometimes fenced with his neigh-

bor, the tobacco dealer, an ex-army officer, and he swam better than any other person on the coast.

He had been a man of the world, very well known in his time, and very elegant, the Baron de Vilbois, who had entered the priesthood at the age of thirty-two, in consequence of an unfortunate love affair.

The scion of an old family of Picardy, Royalist and religious, whose male members for several centuries past had entered the army, official life, or the priesthood, he at first contemplated taking holy orders, following the advice of his mother. But at the instance of his father he decided to go to Paris, study law, and then seek some good appointment in the Palais.

But before he had completed his course his father died of pneumonia, contracted while hunting in the marshes, and his mother followed soon after, overcome with grief. Coming thus into possession of a great fortune, he renounced all his ideas of a career, satisfied with living the life of a man of wealth.

Handsome, intelligent, though his views were limited by beliefs, traditions and principles that were as much inherited as his muscles, which were strong like those of a Picardy falcon, he was popular and well received in society, and enjoyed life, as a young and wealthy man of good principle might.

But one day he fell in love with a young actress, whom he had met at a friend's house; she was a very young pupil of the Conservatory, who had made a brilliant début at the Odéon.

He loved her with all the violence and passion of a man born to believe in absolute ideas. He fell in love with her by seeing her in the rôle in which she achieved a startling success on her first appearance.

She was pretty, naturally perverse, with the naïve air of a child, which he called her angelic air. She succeeded in getting absolute control over him, turning him into one of those delirious slaves, one of those madmen in ecstasy, whom a woman's glance or a woman's skirt will fling upon the stake of mortal passion. He took her for his mistress, made her leave the theater, and loved her for four years with an ever increasing ardor. And he would have married her in the end, in spite of his name and the traditions of honor of his family, had he not discovered one day that she had been deceiving him for a long time with the friend who had introduced him to her.

This discovery was all the more terrible as she was *enceinte*, and he was only waiting for the birth of the child in order to marry her.

When he held the proofs in his hands, letters accidentally found in a drawer, he reproached her with her infidelity, her perfidy, and her ignorance with all the brutality of the semi-barbarian that he was.

But she, the child of the streets of Paris, as impudent as she was shameless, sure of the other one as she had been of this one, and fearless like all the women of the people, who mount upon the barricades in mere foolhardiness, braved and insulted him; and as he was raising his hand against her, she showed him her figure.

He stopped short, turning pale at the thought that a descendant of him was there, in that sullied flesh, in that vile body, in that impure creature—yes, a child by him! At that thought he threw himself upon her, to crush them both, to wipe out the double shame. She was afraid, and believing herself lost, as she was rolling on the floor under his fist, and seeing his raised foot ready to trample upon her body

wherein the human embryo was living, she cried, with hands outstretched to ward off the blows:

“Don’t kill me! It is not yours—it belongs to him!”

He started back, so dumfounded that his fury was suspended, like his fist, and he stammered:

“You—you say——”

And she, mad with fear before the menace of death in the eyes and the terrifying gesture of the man, repeated:

“It is not yours, it belongs to him.”

“The child?” he muttered, through clenched teeth.

“Yes.”

“You lie!”

And again he moved, with the gesture of a man about to crush some one, while his mistress, having risen to her feet, attempted to draw away from him, stammering:

“I tell you that it belongs to him. If it were yours, should I not have had it long ago?”

This argument struck him as true. He felt convinced, in one of those instantaneous flashes of thought wherein all the threads of reasoning appear at the same time, with an illuminating clarity, precise, irrefutable, conclusive, irresistible, and he was sure that he was not the father of this miserable beggar’s child, and, relieved, delivered, almost calmed, of a sudden, he decided not to kill this infamous creature.

He said to her in a somewhat calmer voice:

“Get up, go away and let me never see you again.”

She obeyed, overcome, and went away. And he never saw her again.

He also went away, going toward the Midi, toward the sun, and stopped in a village in the middle of a valley, on the shores of the Mediterranean. An inn looking out upon the sea attracting him, he took a room there. For eighteen months he stayed there in complete isolation, given over to his sorrow and despair. He lived there with the devouring memories of the false woman, dwelling on her unforgettable charm and witcheries, and longing for her presence and her caresses.

He roamed the valley of the Provence in the sunlight checkered with the gray foliage of the olives, his head sick with an obsession.

Then the pious ideas and the tempered ardor of his early faith stole softly into his heart in this sorrowful solitude. Religion, which formerly had appeared to him as a refuge from the life unknown, now seemed to him like a refuge from the life of treachery and torture. He had retained the habit of prayer. He now clung to it in his grief, and he often went at nightfall to kneel in the dark church, where only one lamp was burning at the end of the choir, being the sacred guardian of the sanctuary, the symbol of the Divine presence.

He confided his trouble to this God, his God, telling Him his whole misery. He asked for God's counsel, pity, help, protection, and consolation, and every day he prayed more fervently.

His wounded heart, suffering from the love of a woman, remained open and palpitating; and little by little, consequent upon his prayers, his hermit life, with the habits of piety always increasing, and giving himself up to this secret communication of devout souls with the Saviour, who consoles and draws to Him the miserable ones of earth, the mystic love

of God entered into him and overcame the other love.

Then he returned to his first project and decided to offer to the Church a broken life, which he had not given to her while virgin.

He became a priest. Through his family connections, he succeeded in obtaining the charge of the Provençal village where chance had led him. He gave a large part of his fortune to charitable institutions, retaining only enough to allow him to live a useful life until his death, in aiding the poor, and he retired into the calm existence of practical piety and devotion to his fellow men.

He made a good priest, but with limited outlook, being a kind of religious guide with the temperament of a soldier who would by main force lead erring humanity back into the narrow way—blind humanity lost in this forest of life where all our instincts, our tastes, our desires, only lead us astray. But much of the man of olden days remained alive in him. He still loved violent exercise, the noble sports, and arms, and he detested all women with the fear of a child before a mysterious danger.

II

The sailor who was following the priest felt a truly southern desire to talk. At first he did not dare to do so, as the parishioners stood somewhat in awe of their abbé. But finally he summoned up courage and said:

“ Then you are comfortable in your lodge? ”

This lodge was one of those diminutive houses where the people of the towns and villages of the

Provence go to get fresh air. The abbé had rented this house which stood in a field, about five minutes' walk from his parsonage; the latter was too small and shut-up, close by the church, in the middle of the village.

He did not live in this country house regularly, not even in summer, but merely spent a few days there from time to time, to live among the greenery and to practice pistol-shooting.

"Yes," he replied, "I am very comfortable there."

The low house rose out of the midst of the trees; it was painted pink, and seemed all checkered and cut up by the leaves and branches of the olive trees, which were planted around on the field without inclosure, and it seemed to have grown there like a Provençal mushroom.

A tall woman busied herself in front of the door, setting a small table for dinner. Slowly and deliberately she brought out, one piece at a time, a cover, a plate, a napkin, a piece of bread, a glass. She wore the little bonnet of the women of Arles, in shape of a pointed cone, made of black silk or velvet and decorated with a white *champignon*.

When the abbé came within hailing distance, he called to her:

"Eh, Marguerite?"

She stopped short and looked around, and recognizing her master, she replied:

"Is that you, Monsieur le curé?"

"Yes, I bring you a good catch, and you will at once grill a sunfish for me with butter, nothing but butter."

The woman, coming to meet the men, critically examined the fish held by the sailor.

“ But we have already a chicken with rice,” she said.

“ That’s too bad; fish a day old is never so good as fish fresh from the water. But I will treat myself to a little feast, which does not happen very often; and besides, the catch is not very great.”

The woman took the fish, and as she turned to go she said:

“ A man has been here three times to see you, Monsieur le curé.”

“ A man? What kind of man? ” he asked indifferently.

“ A man whose person is not a recommendation.”

“ What, a beggar? ”

“ Perhaps; I don’t say he is not. I should rather call him a *maoufatan*.”

The abbé began to laugh on hearing this Provençal word, which means felon or tramp, for he knew the timid disposition of Marguerite, who could not stay at the lodge without imagining all day, and especially at night, that they would be assassinated.

He gave a few sous to the sailor, who went away, and as he had preserved all the neatness of the man of the world, said, “ I will wash my face and hands ”; but Marguerite called out to him from the kitchen, where she was scraping the fish, whose scales, somewhat colored with blood, flew up like tiny bits of silver:

“ There he is! ”

The abbé turned toward the road, where he saw a man, who seemed to him at that distance very ill clad, and who was coming slowly toward the house. The abbé stood awaiting him, smiling still at the fear

of his servant, and thinking: "Indeed I think that she is right; he really looks like a *maoufatan*."

The stranger approached slowly, with his hands in his pocket. He was young, and had a blond, curly beard; stray locks of hair hung down beneath his soft gray felt hat, which was so dirty and shapeless that it would have been impossible to guess its original color and form. He wore a long, dark-brown overcoat, trousers that were frayed around the ankles, and linen shoes with soft soles that gave him a noiseless, disquieting step, the silent step of the tramp.

A few feet from the priest he took off his hat with a somewhat theatrical air, disclosing a bald head, a withered, sensual, but shapely face, with the marks of fatigue or of precocious debauchery, for he was surely not more than twenty-five years old.

The priest also took off his hat, for he felt that this was not an ordinary vagabond, an unemployed working-man or a jail-bird roaming around between two terms of prison, and hardly knowing any other language than the mysterious slang of the cells.

"Good day, Monsieur le curé," said the man.

"I greet you," replied the *curé* simply, not caring to address this suspicious and ragged pedestrian as "monsieur." They looked steadily at each other, and in face of this tramp the Abbé Wilbois felt uneasy and moved as before an unknown enemy, overcome by one of those strange attacks of fear that make our flesh and blood shiver.

Finally the tramp said, "Well, do you recognize me?"

"I? Not at all; I don't know you," replied the priest, greatly astonished.

"Ah, you don't know me. Look at me more closely."

“ Look at you as I will, I never have seen you.”

“ That is true,” said the tramp ironically, “ but I will show you some one whom you know better.”

He put on his hat and unbuttoned his overcoat, showing his naked breast. A red belt, twisted around his thin body, held his trousers up above his hips.

He took an envelope out of his pocket, one of those indescribable envelopes covered with all sorts of spots, one of those envelopes in which tramps are wont to keep all their papers, genuine or false, stolen or their own, the precious protectors of their liberty against any police they may meet. He drew a photograph out of it, one of those letter-size cardboards as they were made formerly, yellow, time-worn, having rubbed against the flesh of this man and being tarnished with the heat of his body.

And lifting it up to his face, he asked: “ Do you know him? ”

The abbé stepped nearer to see better, then stood still, pale and startled, for it was his own likeness, made for Her, in the long-ago past of his days of love.

He said nothing, not understanding.

“ Do you know him? ” the vagabond repeated.

“ Yes, I do,” stammered the priest.

“ Who is it? ”

“ It is I? ”

“ It is really you? ”

“ Why, yes.”

“ Well, then look at both of us now, at your likeness and at me.”

The unhappy man had already perceived that these two faces, the one of the photograph and the one who was laughing beside it, resembled each other

like two brothers; but still he did not understand, and he stammered:

“ Well, what do you want of me? ”

“ What I want? I want first of all that you should recognize me,” the beggar said in a malicious tone.

“ But who are you? ”

“ Who am I? Ask anyone on the road, ask your servant, let us go and ask the mayor of this town, if you like, showing him this; and he will laugh, I tell you. Ah, you don’t want to recognize me as your son, papa *curé*? ”

Then the old man, raising his arms in a Biblical attitude of despair, groaned,

“ That is not true.”

The young man came quite close to him, face to face.

“ Ah, it is not true? Ah, abbé, you must stop lying, do you hear? ”

He looked threatening, standing there with his fists closed, and he spoke with such a violent tone of conviction that the priest, drawing back, asked himself which of the two was mistaken at this moment.

Yet he affirmed once again:

“ I never have had any child.”

“ And no mistress, perhaps,” retorted the tramp.

The old man answered resolutely, with the one word “ Yes,” the proud avowal of his past.

“ And this mistress was not with child when you drove her away? ”

Then suddenly the ancient anger, stifled twenty-five years before—no, not stifled, but ripened within the lover’s heart—broke through the bounds of faith, of resigned devotion, of the renunciation of all that he had set upon her, and he cried, beside himself,

“ I drove her away because she had deceived me and bore within her the child of another, without which fact I should have killed her, and you with her.”

The young man hesitated, surprised in turn by the genuine anger of the *curé*; then he said more softly,

“ Who told you that it was the child of another?”

“ Why, she—she herself, in braving me? ”

Then the vagabond, not heeding this affirmation, said with the indifferent tone of a young ruffian who judges of a case:

“ Oh, well, mamma made a mistake, laughing at you.”

“ And who told you that you were my son? ” asked the abbé, regaining his self-control, after his outburst of fury.

“ Why, on her deathbed, Monsieur le *curé*. And then this.”

And he held the little photograph under the eyes of the priest.

The old man took it, and, torn with anguish, he long and deliberately compared this passing stranger with his own former self and no longer doubted that it was his son.

His heart felt compressed, and an inexpressible, frightfully painful feeling came over him, like remorse for a former crime. Understanding a little, and divining the rest, he again beheld the brutal scene of that separation. It was to save her life from the fury of the outraged man, that the woman, the deceitful and perfidious female, had flung that lie at him. The lie had succeeded, and a son by him had been born, had grown up, and had become this low vagabond, who smelled of vice as a goat smells of the beast.

“ Will you walk with me a little, that we may explain things better? ”

“ That’s exactly what I came here for,” said the other with a grin.

They went together, side by side, through the field of olives. The sun was gone. The intensely fresh air of the dusk of the Midi flung an invisible chilly mantle over the country. The abbé shivered, and suddenly raising his eyes with the movement habitual to the officiant, he saw around him, tremblingly outlined against the sky, the small grayish foliage of the holy tree, which had sheltered beneath its frail shadow the greatest sorrow, the one single feebleness of the Christ.

A prayer rose to his lips, short and full of despair, uttered with that interior voice which does not pass beyond the mouth, and with which the believers implore the Saviour: “ O God, help me! ”

Then, turning to his son:

“ You say that your mother is dead? ”

A new sorrow awoke within him in uttering these words, and chilled his heart, the misery of the flesh of the man who has never forgotten, and a cruel echo of the torture which he had suffered, but still more, perhaps, since she was dead, a trembling remembrance of that short and delirious joy of youth of which nothing now remained but the wound in his memory.

“ Yes, Monsieur le curé, my mother is dead,” replied the young man.

“ Is it long ago? ”

“ Yes, already three years.”

Then a new doubt came over the priest.

“ Why did you not come sooner to find me? ”

The other one hesitated.

“ I could not. There were things to keep me. Pardon me for interrupting these confidences, of which I will tell you more later, with as many details as you wish, but I will say now that I have eaten nothing since yesterday morning.”

A shock of pity came over the old man, and suddenly holding out his hands, he said, “ Oh, my poor child! ”

The young man grasped those large outstretched hands, which closed around his more slender fingers, that were moist and feverish. And he said with the air of suavity which he had maintained throughout:

“ Good! I really am beginning to think that we shall understand each other.”

“ Come in to dinner,” said the *curé*, going toward the house.

He suddenly thought, with a little, instinctive, confused, bizarre sort of joy, of the fine fish he had caught, which, together with the chicken and rice, would make a good dinner for this wretched child of his.

The Arlesian woman, restless and impatient, was waiting for him at the door.

“ Marguerite,” cried the abbé, “ take the table into the parlor, and set two plates, quick, quick.”

The servant stood dumfounded at the thought that her master would dine with this felon. Then the Abbé Vilbois began himself to clear the table and take the cover set for him into the only room of the ground floor.

Five minutes later he was sitting opposite the vagabond before a tureen full of cabbage soup, which sent up a thin vapor of hot steam between their faces.

III

When the plates were served the tramp began to eat his soup greedily with great spoonfuls. The abbé was no longer hungry, and merely inhaled slowly the savory odor of the cabbage soup, leaving his bread on his plate.

"What is your name?" he asked suddenly.

The man laughed, satisfied with appeasing his hunger.

"Unknown father," he said, "no other name than that of my mother, which you have probably not yet forgotten. But, instead, I have two given names, which, by the way, are not worth much, Philippe-Auguste."

The abbé, turning pale, asked, with a lump in his throat:

"Why did they give you those names?"

The vagabond shrugged.

"You may guess. After leaving you, mamma wished to make your rival believe that I was his child, and he did think so until I was about fifteen years old. But then I began to look too much like you, and the wretch denied me. They had given me his two names, Philippe-Auguste; and if I had had the good luck not to resemble anyone, or to be merely the son of a third rascal who never had shown up, I should now be called the Vicomte Philippe-Auguste de Pravallon, the tardily acknowledged son of the Viscount of the same name, Senator. I have baptized myself 'Lack-luck.'"

"How did you know all this?"

"Because there were explanations before me, *parbleu*, and violent ones, too. It is these things that make one know life."

Something more painful and griping than anything he had felt and suffered for the last half hour oppressed the priest. It was a kind of choking sensation, which came and grew upon him and would finally kill him, and it was not so much what he heard as the manner of speech and the sensual face of the young ruffian. He felt that between him and his son yawned a ditch of moral filth, which is a mortal poison to some souls. So this was his son? He could not bring himself to believe it. He wished to have the full proofs, all of them; he wanted to find out all, learn all, hear all, suffer all. Again he thought of the olives that surrounded his lodge and again he murmured: "O God, help me!"

Philippe-Auguste had finished his soup.

"Is there nothing more to eat, Abbé?"

The kitchen being outside of the house, in an adjoining building, where Marguerite could not hear his voice, the priest was wont to summon her by means of blows on a Chinese gong hung near the wall behind him.

Accordingly he took the hammer and struck it several times against the round metal disk. The sound, slight at first, increased, became more pronounced, vibrant, sharp, still more sharp, an ear-splitting, horrible plaint of the struck metal.

The servant appeared, with set face, looking furiously at the *maoufatan*, as if guessing, with her instinct like that of a faithful dog, the drama unfolding around her master. She held in her hand the grilled fish, which sent up the savory odor of melted butter. The abbé split open the fish with a spoon, and, offering the *filet* of the back to the child of his youth, he said, with a remnant of pride remaining through his sorrow:

"I caught it myself a while ago."

Marguerite was still in the room.

"Bring wine, some good white wine of the Corsican Cape," he said to her.

She made a gesture, as if in revolt, and he had to repeat with an air of severity: "Go! two bottles." For when he offered wine to anyone, which happened rarely, he always treated himself to a full bottle.

Philippe-Auguste murmured radiantly:

"Fine! a good idea! It is a long time since I have eaten like this."

The servant came back in two minutes. But they seemed an eternity to the abbé, who was sitting on coals, devoured with the desire to know all.

The bottles were uncorked, but the woman still stood there, with her eyes on the strange man.

"Leave us," said the *curé*.

She pretended not to hear, and he repeated severely, "I have told you to leave us alone."

Then she went.

Philippe-Auguste ate the fish voraciously; and his father looked at him, more and more surprised and saddened to see so much that was low in the face that resembled him so strongly. The small bits that the abbé put into his mouth, stuck there, for he could not swallow anything; and he chewed these mouthfuls, searching among all the questions that came to his mind, the one to which he wanted the quickest answer. Finally he murmured:

"Of what did she die?"

"Of lung trouble."

"Was she ill a long time?"

"About eighteen months."

"How did she get it?"

"No one knows."

They were silent. The abbé sat lost in thought. So many things came to him, that he wanted to know, for he had heard nothing about her since the day of the rupture, since the day when he has almost killed her. True, he had not wished to know anything, for he had resolutely flung her and the days of his happiness into the grave of oblivion; but now that she was dead, there suddenly arose in him the desire to know, a jealous desire, almost a lover's desire.

“ She was not alone? ” he resumed.

“ No, she was always living with him.”

“ With him—with Pravallon? ” asked the old man, startled.

“ Why, yes.”

And the man who had been betrayed realized that this same woman who had deceived him had lived for more than thirty years with his rival. Almost in spite of himself he stammered:

“ Were they happy together? ”

“ Why, yes, with ups and downs,” said the young man sneeringly. “ They would have got on together famously without me, but I always spoiled everything.”

“ How and why? ” asked the priest.

“ I have already told you. Because he thought that I was his son, up to the time I was fifteen years old. But he was not a fool, this old one; he himself discovered the resemblance, and then there were scenes. I was listening at the keyholes. He accused mamma of having got him into a mess. ‘ Is it my fault,’ she replied. ‘ You knew very well when you took me, that I was the mistress of the other one.’ You were ‘ the other one.’ ”

“ Then they sometimes talked of me? ”

“ Yes, but they never mentioned you by name be-

fore me, except at the very last, when mamma felt her end come. Still they were distrustful."

"And you—you found out early in life that your mother was living irregularly?"

"*Parbleu*, I'm not simple, and I have never been. One soon guesses at those things, when one begins to know life."

Philippe-Auguste poured himself glass after glass. His eyes became brilliant, for his long fast now quickly sent the wine to his head.

The priest noticed it; he was about to stop him, then it occurred to him that if the young man became drunk he might talk more freely and unthinkingly; and so, taking up the bottle, the abbé again filled his glass.

Marguerite brought the chicken with rice. After placing it on the table, she again fixed her eyes upon the tramp, and said to her master with an air of indignation:

"But look how dirty he is, Monsieur le curé."

"Leave us alone, and go out," the priest replied. She went out, slamming the door.

"What did your mother say about me?" asked the priest.

"Why, what one usually says of a man whom one has left. That you were not the right kind, stupid for a woman to live with, and that you would have made life hard for her with your ideas."

"Did she say that often?"

"Yes, sometimes with subterfuges, so that I should not understand, but I guessed it all."

"And how were you treated in this house?"

"I? Very well at first and then very badly. When mamma saw that I was spoiling things for her, she put me out."

“How so?”

“How so? Simple enough. When I was about sixteen I did some foolish tricks, and those two nice parents put me into a reformatory, to get rid of me.”

Putting his elbows on the table, he rested his cheeks on his hands, and, entirely drunk now, his mind befuddled with the wine, he was suddenly seized with that irresistible desire to talk about himself which turns drunkards into fantastic braggarts.

He smiled sweetly, with a feminine, perverse grace on his lips which the priest recognized. He not only recognized it, but he felt it, hateful and caressing, that grace which had formerly conquered and then betrayed him. At this moment the child resembled its mother the most, not in feature, but in the captivating and false eye, and especially in the seduction of the deceitful smile, which seemed to open the portals of the mouth to all the infamies within.

“Ah, ah, ah, but I have led a life!” began Philippe-Auguste, “after those days in the reformatory, a full kind of life, which a great novelist would pay dear to know. Really, Dumas *père*, with his *Monte Cristo*, has not invented so many situations as I have found myself in.”

He stopped, looking grave like a gray-haired philosopher lost in thought, then he continued slowly:

“If you want to have a boy turn out well, you must never send him to a reformatory, because of the acquaintances he will make there. Mine was a good one, but it turned out badly. As I was walking on the turnpike near the ford of Folac, one evening with three comrades, all four of us a little intoxicated, I met a carriage, in which the driver and

all his family were sleeping; they were people from Martinon, who were returning from a dinner in town. I took the horse by the bridle, made it go upon the raft used as a ferry, and pushed the raft into the river. The noise this made woke up the driver, who, not seeing clear, whipped up the horse, which started and jumped into the water with the carriage. All were drowned. My comrades told on me, though they laughed loudly at first on seeing me play this trick. We really didn't think that it would turn out so badly. We simply thought to give the people a bath, and laugh at them.

"After that I did worse things, to get even for the punishment I got for that one. I really did not deserve it, but it is not worth while to tell you all this. I will merely tell my last escapade, because you will like that one, I'm sure. I have revenged you, papa!"

The abbé was looking at his son with terrified eyes; he was no longer eating.

As Philippe-Auguste was about to continue, the priest said:

"Not now—later."

Turning around, he struck the Chinese gong, which emitted its strident noise.

Marguerite appeared at once. Her master said to her:

"Bring in the lamp and whatever else you have to put on the table, and then you will not come in again until I ring the gong."

He said this in such a harsh tone that she hung her head, frightened and obedient, and went out. She soon came in again, with a white porcelain lamp with a green shade; she placed this on the table, together with a large piece of cheese and some fruit, and then went out again.

“ Now I will hear what you have to say,” said the abbé resolutely.

Philippe-Auguste calmly finished his dessert and his wine. The second bottle was nearly empty, although the *curé* had not touched it.

The young man went on, stammering, his mouth smeared with food and dirt.

“ The last one, here it is. This is a strong one. I had come back to the house; and I stayed there in spite of them—because—because they were afraid of me—afraid of me! Ah, one must not bore me, I’m capable of anything when I am bored. You know—they were living together and yet not together. He had two establishments, one as a senator and one as a lover. But he lived with mamma much more than in his own home, for he could no longer live without her. Ah, she was a clever one, and a strong one—was mamma—she knew how to keep a man. She had taken possession of him body and soul, and she kept him to the end. Men are such fools! Well, I had come home, and I lorded it over them by making them afraid of me. I am a sly one, if need be, and as for malice, tricks, and even fisticuffs, I’m not afraid of any one. Then mamma got sick, and he installed her in a fine country house near Meulan, in the middle of a park as large as a forest. This lasted about eighteen months, as I have told you. Then we saw the end approaching. He came every day from Paris, and he was filled with grief, yes, real grief.

“ One morning they had been talking together for more than an hour, and I was wondering about what they could be chattering for such a time, when finally they called me in, and mamma said to me:

“ ‘ I am about to die, and there is something

that I wish to reveal to you, in spite of the advice of the Comte '—she always called him 'Comte' in speaking of him. 'It is the name of your father, who is still living.'

"I had asked her this name more than a hundred times—more than a hundred times—the name of my father—more than a hundred times—and she had always refused to tell me. I even think that one day I boxed her ears, to make her talk, but she would not. Then, to get rid of me, she told me that you had died, without a sou, that you did not amount to much, it was merely a mistake of her youth, a mere girl's fancy. She told me this so convincingly that I really believed you were dead.

"Accordingly she said to me:

" 'This is your father's name.'

"The other one, who was sitting in an arm-chair, repeated three times, like this: 'You make a mistake, you make a mistake, you make a mistake, Rosette.'

"Mamma sat up in her bed. I still see her, with her red cheeks and her brilliant eyes, for she really loved me, all the same; and she said to him: 'Then you do something for him, Philippe.'

"In speaking to him, she addressed him as Philippe, and she called me Auguste.

"He began to laugh like a crazy man.

" 'For that love-child, that good-for-nothing, that jail-bird, that—that—that——'

"And he hurled epithets at me, as if he never had done anything else in his life.

"I was about to get angry, when mamma stopped me, saying to him:

" 'Then you want him to die of hunger, as I have nothing myself.'

“ He replied, undisturbed :

“ ‘ Rosette, I have given you thirty-six thousand francs a year for thirty years, which makes more than a million. You have lived with me as a rich woman, a well-beloved woman, and, I dare say, a happy woman. I owe nothing to this beggar, who has spoiled our last years together, and he shall have nothing from me. It is useless to insist upon it. Give him the name of the other, if you wish to do so. I am sorry, but I wash my hands.’ ”

“ Then mamma turned towards me. ‘ Good ! ’ I said to myself, ‘ now I shall find my real father. If he has money, I am saved.’ ”

“ She continued :

“ ‘ Your father, the Baron de Vilbois, is now the Abbé Vilbois, *curé* of Garandou near Toulon. He was my lover when I left him for this one.’ ”

“ And then she told me everything, except that she accused you also of being the father of her child. But women, you know, never tell the truth.”

He was grinning, unconscionably, revealing all his foulness. He was still drinking, and with face still hilarious, he continued :

“ Mamma died two days later—two days. We followed her to the cemetery—he and I—and three servants—that was all. He cried like a cow—we were close together—one might have said, father and son.”

“ Then we came back to the house. Only we two. I said to myself : ‘ Now I must skip, without a sou.’ I had exactly fifty francs. What could I do now to get even ? ”

“ ‘ I wish to speak to you,’ he said to me.

“ I followed him to his study. He sat down before his table and, whining in his tears, he said that

he would not treat me as badly as he had maintained before mamma; he also asked me not to bore you. But that concerns us two, you and me. He offered me a thousand-franc bill! One thousand—one thousand—what can I do with one thousand francs, a man like me? I saw that he had more in the drawer, a whole pile. The sight of that paper there made me feel like stabbing him. I held out my hand to take the one he wanted to give me, but instead of taking his alms I jumped upon him, threw him down on the floor, and choked him until his eyes stuck out of his head; then when he seemed ready to give up the ghost, I gagged him, bound him, undressed him, and then—ah, ah, ah! I have revenged you in a funny way! ”

Philippe-Auguste coughed, choking with laughter, and on his ferocious and laughing lip the abbé again and again saw the quondam smile of the woman who made him lose his head.

“ And then? ” he asked.

“ Then. Ah, ah, ah! There was a big fire in the fireplace—it was in December, in the cold—that she died—mamma—a large coal fire—I take the poker—I make it red-hot—and then. I burn him two crosses on the back—eight, ten, I don’t know how many; then I turn him over and make as many on his belly. Isn’t that funny, eh, papa? That way one formerly branded the galley-slaves. He twisted about like an eel—but I had gagged him well, he could not cry out. Then I took the bank-notes—twelve of them—which with my own made thirteen—this did not bring me luck. And I escaped, saying to the servants not to disturb Monsieur le Comte until dinner time because he was sleeping.

“ I thought that he would say nothing, for fear

of the scandal, since he is a senator. But I was mistaken. Four days later I was caught in a restaurant in Paris. I got three years in prison, and that's why I did not come to see you before."

He was still drinking, his tongue so heavy that he could hardly speak.

"Now, papa—papa *curé*—isn't it funny to have a *curé* for a papa? Ah, ah, you must be good with *bibi*, because *bibi* is not the ordinary kind—and he has played a good—not so?—a good—joke on the old——"

The same anger which had formerly maddened the abbé before his treacherous mistress now filled him before this abominable man.

He who in the name of God had pardoned so many infamous secrets whispered into his ear in the mystery of the confessional, felt pitiless on his own account, and he did not now call upon this helpful and merciful God, for he understood that no protection from heaven or earth can save here below those who are like this man.

All the ardor of his passionate heart and his violent temper, dormant in his episcopal office, awoke in a feeling of irresistible revolt against this wretch who was his son, against this resemblance to him, and also against the mother, the unworthy mother who had conceived him like unto her, and against fate, which riveted this beggar to his father's foot, like the ball of a galley-slave.

He saw everything at a flash, awaked by this shock out of his twenty-five years of pious sleep and tranquillity.

Suddenly convinced that he must talk loud in order to awaken fear in this criminal, and to terrify him at the outset, he said to him, with teeth clenched

in fury, and no longer thinking of his intoxicated condition:

“ Now that you have told me everything, listen to me. You will leave here to-morrow morning. You will live in a place that I will designate to you, and which you never will leave without my orders. I will pay you there a pension on which you can live, but a small one, as I have no money. If you disobey even once only, it is over, and you will have to do without me.”

Although overcome with the wine, Philippe-Auguste understood the threat, and the criminal in him suddenly awoke.

“ Ah, papa, don't threaten me,” he spluttered. “ You are a *curé*—I've got you there—and you'll come around—as the other did——”

The abbé jumped up, and in his muscles of old Hercules he felt the irresistible desire to take hold of this monster, to double him up like a wand, and to show him that he must give way.

“ Ah, take care, take care! I'm not afraid of anyone,” he cried, shaking the table and pushing it against him.

The drunken fellow, losing his equilibrium, wavered in his chair. Feeling that he was about to fall, and that he was in the power of the priest, he reached out his hand toward one of the knives lying on the table, with the gleam of the assassin in his eye. The Abbé Vilbois saw the movement, and he pushed the table so hard that his son toppled over on his back on the floor. The lamp upset and went out.

For a second there was the tinkling of broken glass in the darkness, then a sound as of the crawling of a soft body over the floor; then silence.

When the lamp broke the sudden darkness that

fell over them was so unexpected and deep that they were stupefied as by a frightful event. The drunken fellow, crouching against the wall, did not move; and the priest stayed on his chair, plunged in the darkness, which extinguished his anger. This somber veil cast over him arrested his passion and also stilled the fury of his soul; and other ideas came to him, dark and gloomy as the obscurity.

There was silence as of a closed tomb, where nothing seemed to live or breathe. No noise came in from the outside, no sound of a wagon in the distance, no barking of a dog, not even the slight breath of the wind outside or against the wall.

This lasted for a long time, perhaps an hour. Then suddenly the gong sounded, struck by a single, sharp, hard blow, which was followed by a curious noise of a fall and of a chair thrown down.

Marguerite, who had been on the watch, came running in; but when she opened the door she started back, frightened at the impenetrable darkness.

“Monsieur le curé! Monsieur le curé!” she called, trembling, with beating heart and hesitating voice.

But no one answered and nothing stirred.

“Great God! great God!” she said, “what have they done, what has happened?”

She did not dare go in, nor to go back for a light, and she was seized with the mad desire to scream, to flee and save herself, though her legs trembled so that she was ready to fall.

“Monsieur le curé Monsieur le curé!” she repeated, “it is me, Marguerite.”

Then in spite of her fear, the instinctive desire came over her to save her master, and an access of bravery, such as turns women at times into heroines,

filled her soul with terrified audacity, and running to her kitchen she brought back her lamp.

She stopped on the sill. She saw, first, the vagabond stretched out by the wall, who was sleeping or seemed to sleep; then the broken lamp; then, under the table, the two black feet and the black-stockinged legs of the Abbé Vilbois, who must have fallen on his back in hitting the gong.

Shaking with fright and with trembling hands, she repeated,

“ My God! My God! what is this? ”

As she was cautiously advancing, she slipped on something sticky and nearly fell down.

Then stooping down, she perceived on the red pavement a red liquid, flowing around her feet and rolling rapidly toward the door. She guessed that it was blood.

Frightened out of her wits, she fled, throwing away her lamp, so as to see nothing more, and rushed out into the field, toward the village. She flew along, screaming, bumping against the trees, her eyes bent upon the distant lights.

Her sharp voice rang through the night like the sinister cry of an owl, incessantly repeating: “ The *maoufatan*—the *maoufatan*! ”

As she reached the first houses, frightened men came out and gathered around her; but she fought them without answering, for she has lost her head.

They finally understood that something had happened at the priest's house, and a posse armed themselves to run to his assistance.

The little pink lodge, in the middle of the field of olives, had sunk invisible and black into the still, dark night. Since the gleam in its one lighted window had been extinguished like a closed eye, it was

hidden in the shadow, lost in the darkness, and not to be found by anyone except one born in that locality.

Soon lights came running toward it, through the trees. Long yellow beams fell over the burned grass, and in the unsteady clarity the twisted trunks of the olive trees seemed like monsters, or serpents of the inferno interlaced and twisted. Suddenly something white and vague rose out of the obscurity, and then the low, square wall of the little house became pink in the light of the lanterns. Some peasants were carrying them, escorting two policemen, revolvers in hand, the country watchman, the mayor, and Marguerite, almost fainting and supported by two men.

The men hesitated a moment before the open door, then the brigadier, seizing a lantern, entered, followed by the others.

The servant had spoken truth. The blood, now curdled, covered the flagging like a carpet. It had crept over to the vagabond, bathing one of his legs and one of his hands.

Father and son were sleeping, one, with his throat cut, the eternal sleep, and the other the sleep of the drunkard. The two policemen seized the latter, and he was handcuffed before he was fairly awake. He rubbed his eyes, stupefied and made brutish with the wine; and when he saw the corpse of the priest he looked terrified, and as if not comprehending anything.

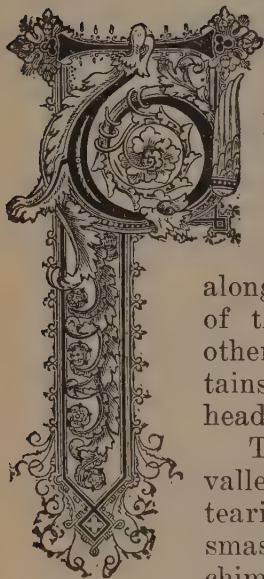
“Why didn’t he escape?” said the mayor.

“He was too drunk,” said the brigadier.

And everybody was of the same opinion, for it did not occur to anyone that the Abbé Vilbois might have committed suicide.



THE DRUNKARD



HE north wind was blowing a gale, driving through the sky big, black, heavy clouds from which the rain poured down on the earth with terrific violence.

The raging sea was roaring and shrieking, its foamy mane pounding along the coast with the rumbling sound of thunder. The waves followed each other close, rolling in as high as mountains and shaking the foam from their heads.

The storm engulfed itself in the little valley of Yport, hissing and moaning, tearing the shingles from the roofs, smashing the blinds, knocking down the chimneys, rushing through the narrow streets so swiftly that only by holding to the walls could one walk, and children would have been lifted up like leaves and carried over the houses into the fields.

The fishing-smacks had been hauled high up on the shore, because at high tide the sea would sweep the beach. Several sailors, hidden behind the curved bottoms of their boats, were watching this battle of the sky and the sea.

Then, little by little, they went away, for night was falling on the storm, wrapping in shadows the raging ocean and all the battling elements.

Just two men remained, their hands dug deep in their pockets, their backs bending under the heavy gusts of wind, their woolen caps pulled down over their ears; two big Normandy fishermen, bearded, their skin tanned through exposure, with the piercing black eyes of the sailor who looks over the horizon like a bird of prey.

One of them was saying

“Come on, Jérémié, let's go play dominoes. It's my treat.”

The other hesitated a while, tempted on one hand by the game and the thought of brandy, knowing fully that, if he went to Paumelle's, he would return home drunk; held back, on the other hand, by the idea of his wife remaining alone in the hut.

He asked:

“Anyone might think that you had made a bet to get me drunk every night. Say, what good is it doing you, since it's always you that's treating?”

Nevertheless, he was smiling at the idea of all this brandy drunk at the expense of another; he was smiling the contented smirk of an avaricious Normand.

Mathurin, his friend, kept pulling him by the sleeve.

“Come on, Jérémié. This isn't the kind of a night to go home without anything to warm you up. What are you afraid of? Isn't your wife going to warm your bed for you?”

Jérémié answered:

“The other night I couldn't find the door—I had to be fished out of the ditch, in front of the house!”

He was still laughing at this drunkard's recollection, and he was unconsciously going towards Paumelle Café, where a light was shining in the window; he was going, pulled by Mathurin and pushed by the wind, unable to resist these combined forces.

The low room was full of sailors, smoke and noise. All these men, clad in woollens, their elbows on the tables, were shouting to make themselves heard. The more people came in, the more one had to shout in order to overcome the noise of voices and the rattling of dominoes on the marble tables.

Jérémie and Mathurin sat down in a corner and began a game, and the glasses were emptied in rapid succession into their thirsting throats.

Then they played more games and drank more glasses. Mathurin kept pouring and winking to the saloon keeper, a big, red-faced man, who chuckled as though at the thought of some fine joke; and Jérémie kept absorbing alcohol and wagging his head, giving vent to a roar of laughter and looking at his comrade with a stupid and contented expression.

All the customers were going away. Every time that one of them would open the door to leave, a gust of wind would blow into the café, making the tobacco smoke swirl around, swinging the lamps at the end of their chains and making their flames flicker; and suddenly one could hear the deep booming of a breaking wave and the moaning of the wind.

Jérémie, his collar unbuttoned, was taking drunkard's poses, one leg outstretched, one arm hanging down, and in the other hand holding a domino.

They were alone now with the owner, who had come up to them, interested.

He asked:

“ Well, Jérémié, how goes it inside? Feel less thirsty after wetting your throat? ”

Jérémié muttered:

“ The more I wet it, the drier it gets inside. ”

The innkeeper cast a sly look over to Mathurin.

He said:

“ And your brother, Mathurin, where’s he now? ”

The sailor laughed silently:

“ Don’t worry, he’s warm, all right. ”

And both of them looked towards Jérémié, who was triumphantly putting down the double six and announcing:

“ Game! ”

Then the owner declared:

“ Well, boys, I’m going to bed. I will leave you the lamp and the bottle; there’s twenty cents’ worth in it. Lock the door when you go, Mathurin, and slip the key under the mat the way you did the other night. ”

Mathurin answered:

“ Don’t worry. It’ll be all right. ”

Paumelle shook hands with his two customers, and slowly went up the wooden stairs. For several minutes his heavy step echoed through the little house; then a loud squeaking announced that he had climbed into bed.

The two men continued to play. From time to time, a more violent gust of wind would shake the whole house, and the two drinkers would look up, as though someone were about to enter. Then Mathurin would take the bottle and fill Jérémié’s glass. But suddenly, the clock over the bar struck twelve times. The hoarse gong sounded like the rattling

of dishpans. Then Mathurin got up, like a sailor whose watch is over:

“ Come on, Jérémie, we’ve got to get out.”

The other man started up with difficulty, got his balance by leaning on the table, reached the door and opened it while his companion was putting out the light.

As soon as they were in the street, Mathurin locked the door, and then said:

“ Well, good-by. See you to-morrow night! ”

And he disappeared in the darkness.

Jérémie took a few steps, tottered, stretched out his hand, met a wall which supported him and began to stumble along. From time to time, a gust of wind would sweep through the street, pushing him forward, making him run for a few steps; then, when the wind would die down, he would stop short, having lost his impetus, and once more he would begin to stagger along on his unsteady drunkard’s legs.

He went instinctively toward his home, just as birds go to their nests. Finally he recognized his door, and he began to feel around for the keyhole and tried to put the key in it. Not finding the hole, he began to swear. Then he began to beat on the door with his fists, calling for his wife to come and help him:

“ Méлина! Oh! Méлина! ”

As he leaned against the door for support, it gave way and opened, and Jérémie, losing his prop, fell inside, rolling on his face into the middle of his room, and he felt something heavy pass over him and escape in the night.

He was no longer moving, dazed by fright, be-

wildered, fearing the devil, ghosts, all the mysterious beings of darkness, and he waited a long time without daring to move. But when he found out that nothing else was moving, a little reason returned to him, the reason of a drunkard.

Gently he sat up. Again he waited a long time, and at last, growing bolder, he called:

“Mélina!”

His wife did not answer.

Then, suddenly, a suspicion crossed his darkened mind, an indistinct, vague suspicion. He was not moving; he was sitting there in the dark, trying to gather together his scattered wits, his mind stumbling over incomplete ideas, just as his feet stumbled along.

Once more he asked:

“Who was it, Mélina? Tell me who it was. I won’t hurt you!”

He waited, no voice was raised in the darkness. He was now reasoning with himself out loud.

“I’m drunk, all right! I’m drunk! And he filled me up, the dog; he did it, to stop my going home. I’m drunk!”

And he would continue:

“Tell me who it was, Mélina, or something will happen to you.”

After having waited again, he went on with the slow and obstinate logic of a drunkard:

“He’s been keeping me at that loafer Paumelle’s place every night, so as to stop my going home. He’s a pal. Oh! You damned hound!”

Slowly he got on his knees. A blind fury was gaining possession of him, mingling with the fumes of alcohol.

He continued:

“ Tell me who it was, Méline, or you’ll get a licking—look out! ”

He was now standing, trembling with a wild fury, as though the alcohol had set his blood on fire. He took a step, knocked against a chair, seized it, went on, reached the bed, ran his hands over it and felt the warm body of his wife.

Then, maddened, he roared:

“ So! You were there, you piece of dirt, and you wouldn’t answer! ”

And, lifting the chair, which he was holding in his strong sailor’s grip, he swung it down before him with an exasperated fury. A cry burst from the bed, an agonizing, piercing cry. Then he began to thrash around like a thresher in a barn. And soon, nothing more moved. The chair was broken to pieces; but he still held one leg and beat away with it, panting.

At last he stopped to ask:

“ Well, are you ready to tell me who it was? ”
Méline did not answer.

Then, tired out, stupefied from his exertion, he stretched himself out on the ground and slept.

When day came, a neighbor, seeing the door open, entered. He saw Jérémie snoring on the floor, amid the broken pieces of a chair, and on the bed a pulp of flesh and blood.





A PARRICIDE



HE lawyer had presented a plea of insanity. How could anyone explain this strange crime otherwise?

One morning, in the grass near Chatou, two bodies had been found, a man and a woman, well known, rich, no longer young, and married since the preceding year, the woman having been a widow for three years before.

They were not known to have enemies; they had not been robbed. They seemed to have been thrown from the roadside into the river, after having been struck, one after the other, with a long iron spike.

The investigation revealed nothing. The boatmen, who had been questioned, knew nothing. The matter was about to be given up, when a young carpenter from the neighboring village, Georges Louis, nickname "the *bourgeois*," gave himself up.

To all questions he only answered this:

"I had known the man for two years, the woman for six months. They often had me repair old furniture for them, because I am a clever workman."

And when he was asked:

"Why did you kill them?"

He would obstinately answer:

"I killed them because I wanted to kill them."

They could get nothing more out of him.

This man was undoubtedly an illegitimate child, put out to nurse and then abandoned. He had no

other name than Georges Louis, but as on growing up he became particularly intelligent, with the good taste and native refinement which his acquaintances did not have, he was nicknamed "the *bourgeois*," and he was never called otherwise. He had become remarkably clever in the trade of a carpenter, which he had taken up. He was also said to be a socialist fanatic, a believer in communistic and nihilistic doctrines, a great reader of bloodthirsty novels, an influential political agitator and a clever orator in the public meetings of workmen or of farmers.

* * * * *

The lawyer had pleaded insanity.

Indeed, how could one imagine that this workman should kill his best customers, rich and generous (as he knew), who, in two years, had made him earn three thousand francs (his books showed it)? Only one explanation could be offered: insanity, the fixed idea of the nondescript who reeks vengeance on two *bourgeois*, on all the *bourgeoisie*, and the lawyer made a clever allusion to this nickname of "the *bourgeois*," given throughout the neighborhood to this poor wretch; he exclaimed:

"Is this irony not enough to unbalance the mind of this poor wretch, who has neither father nor mother? He is an ardent republican. What am I saying? He even belongs to the same political party the members of which the Government formerly shot or exiled, and which it now welcomes with open arms—this party to which arson is a principle and murder an ordinary occurrence.

"These gloomy doctrines, now applauded in public meetings, have ruined this man. He has heard republicans—even women, yes, women—ask for the blood of Monsieur Gambetta, and of Monsieur

Grévy; his weakened mind gave way; he wanted blood, the blood of a *bourgeois*!

“It is not he whom you should condemn, gentlemen, it is the Commune!”

Everywhere could be heard murmurs of assent. Everyone felt that the lawyer had won his case. The prosecuting attorney did not oppose him.

Then the presiding judge asked the accused the customary question:

“Prisoner, is there anything that you wish to add to your defence?”

The man stood up.

He was a short, flaxen blond, with calm, clear, gray eyes. A strong, frank, clear voice came from this frail-looking boy which, at the first words, quickly changed the opinion of him which had been formed.

He spoke loud, in a declamatory manner, but so distinctly that every word could be understood in the farthest corners of the big hall:

“Your honor, as I do not wish to go to an insane asylum, and as I even prefer death to that, I will tell everything.

“I killed this man and this woman because they were my parents.

“Now, listen and judge me.

“A woman, having given birth to a boy, sent him out, somewhere, to nurse. Did she even know where her accomplice carried this innocent little being, condemned to eternal misery, to the shame of an illegitimate birth; to more than that—to death, since he was abandoned, since the nurse, no longer receiving the monthly pension, could, as they often do, let him die of hunger and neglect!

“The woman who nursed me was honest, better,

more noble, more of a mother than my own mother. She brought me up. She did wrong in doing her duty. It is more humane to let them die, these little wretches who are cast away in suburban villages, just as garbage is thrown away.

“ I grew up with the indistinct impression that I was carrying some burden of shame. One day, the other children called me a ‘ bastard.’ They did not know what this word meant, which one of them had heard at home. I was also ignorant of its meaning, but I felt the sting, all the same.

“ I was, I may say, one of the cleverest boys in the school. I would have been a good man, your honor, perhaps a man of superior intellect, if my parents had not committed the crime of abandoning me.

“ This crime was committed against me. I was the victim, they the guilty ones. I was defenceless, they were pitiless. Their duty was to love me; they rejected me.

“ I owed them life—but is life a boon? To me, at any rate, it was a misfortune. After their shameful desertion, I owed them only vengeance. They committed against me the most inhuman, the most infamous, the most monstrous crime which can be committed against a human creature.

“ A man who has been insulted, strikes; a man who has been robbed, takes back his own by force. A man who has been deceived, played upon, tortured, kills; a man who has been slapped, kills; a man who has been dishonored, kills. I have been robbed, deceived, tortured, morally slapped, dishonored, all this to a greater degree than those whose anger you excuse.

“ I revenged myself, I killed. It was my legiti-

mate right. I took their happy life in exchange for the terrible one which they had forced on me.

“ You will call me parricide! Were these people my parents, for whom I was an abominable burden, a terror, an infamous shame; for whom my birth was a calamity, and my life a threat of disgrace? They sought a selfish pleasure; they got an unexpected child. They suppressed the child. My turn came to do the same for them.

“ And yet, up to quite recently, I was ready to love them.

“ As I have said, this man, my father, came to me for the first time two years ago. I suspected nothing. He ordered two articles of furniture. I found out, later on, that, under the seal of secrecy, naturally, he had sought information from the priest.

“ He returned often. He gave me a lot of work and paid me well. Sometimes he would even talk to me of one thing or another. I felt a growing affection for him.

“ At the beginning of this year he brought with him his wife, my mother. When she entered, she was trembling so that I thought her to be suffering from some nervous disease. Then she asked for a seat and a glass of water. She said nothing; she looked around abstractedly at my work, and only answered ‘ yes’ and ‘ no,’ at random, to all the questions which he asked her. When she had left I thought her a little unbalanced.

“ The following month, they returned. She was calm, self-controlled. That day they chatted for a long time, and they left me a rather large order. I saw her three more times, without suspecting anything. But one day, she began to talk to me of my life, of my childhood, of my parents. I answered:

‘Madame, my parents were wretches who deserted me.’ Then she clutched at her heart, and fell, unconscious. I immediately thought: ‘She is my mother!’ but I took care not to let her notice anything. I wished to observe her.

“I, in turn, sought out information about them. I learned that they had been married since last July, my mother having been a widow for only three years. There had been rumors that they had loved each other during the lifetime of the first husband, but there was no proof of it. I was the proof—the proof which they had at first hidden, and then hoped to destroy.

“I waited. She returned, one evening, escorted as usual by my father. That day she seemed deeply moved, I don’t know why. Then, as she was leaving, she said to me: ‘I wish you success, because you seem to me to be honest and a hard worker; some day, you will undoubtedly think of getting married; I have come to help you choose freely the woman who may suit you. I have been married against my inclination once, and I know what suffering it causes. Now, I am rich, childless, free, mistress of my fortune. Here is your dowry.’

“She held out to me a large, sealed envelope.

“I looked her straight in the eyes, and then said: ‘Are you my mother?’

“She drew back a few steps and hid her face in her hands, in order no longer to see me. He, the man, my father, supported her in his arms, and cried to me: ‘You must be crazy!’

“I answered: ‘Not in the least. I know that you are my parents. I cannot be thus deceived. Admit it and I will keep the secret; I will bear you no ill will; I will remain what I am, a carpenter.’

“ He retreated toward the door, still supporting his wife who was beginning to sob. Quickly I locked the door, put the key in my pocket, and continued: ‘ Look at her and dare to deny that she is my mother.’ ”

“ Then he flew into a passion, very pale, terrified at the thought that the scandal, which had so far been avoided, might suddenly break out; that their position, their good name, their honor might all at once be lost; he was stammering: ‘ You are a rascal, you wish to get money from us. That’s the thanks we get for trying to help the common people! ’ ”

“ My mother, bewildered, kept repeating: ‘ Let’s get out of here, let’s get out! ’ ”

“ Then, when he found the door locked, he exclaimed: ‘ If you do not open this door immediately, I will have you thrown into prison for blackmail and assault! ’ ”

“ I had remained calm; I opened the door and saw them disappear in the darkness. ”

“ Then, I seemed to have been suddenly orphaned, deserted, pushed to the wall. I was seized with an overwhelming sadness, mingled with anger, hatred, disgust; my whole being seemed to rise up in revolt against the injustice, the meanness, the dishonor, the rejected love. I began to run, in order to overtake them along the Seine, which they had to follow in order to reach the station of Chatou. ”

“ I soon caught up with them. It was now pitch dark. I was creeping up behind them softly, that they might not hear me. My mother was still crying. My father was saying: ‘ It’s all your own fault. Why did you wish to see him? It was absurd, in our position. We could have helped him from afar, without showing ourselves. Of what use are

these dangerous visits, since we can't recognize him?'

"Then I rushed up to them, beseeching. I cried: 'You see! You *are* my parents. You have already rejected me once, would you repulse me again?'

"Then, your honor, he struck me; I swear it on my honor, before the law and my country. He struck me, and, as I seized him by the collar, he drew from his pocket a revolver.

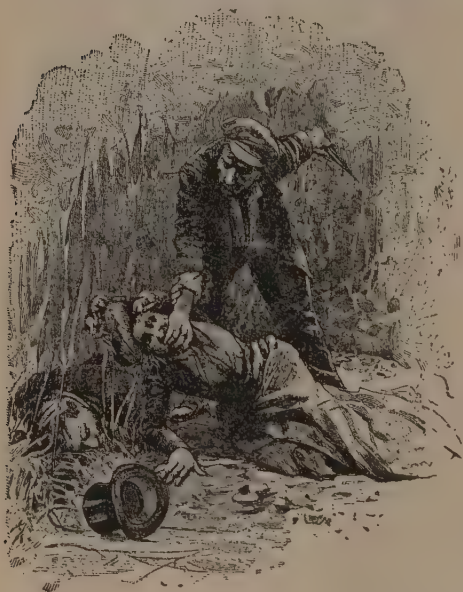
"The blood rushed to my head, I no longer knew what I was doing, I had my compass in my pocket; I struck him with it as often as I could.

"Then she began to cry: 'Help! Murder!' and to pull my beard. It seems that I killed her also. How do I know what I did then?

"Then, when I saw them both lying on the ground, without thinking, I threw them into the Seine.

"That's all. Now, sentence me."

The prisoner sat down. After this revelation, the case was carried over to the following session. It comes up very soon. If we were jurymen, what should we do with this parricide?





THE WOLF



HIS is what the old Marquis d'Arville told us near the end of St. Hubert's dinner at the house of the Baron des Ravels.

We had killed a stag that day. The Marquis was the only one of the guests who had not taken part in this chase. He never hunted.

During that long repast we had talked about hardly anything but the slaughter of animals. The ladies themselves were interested in bloody and exaggerated tales, and the orators imitated the attacks and the combats of men against beasts, raised their arms, and romanced in a thundering voice.

M. d'Arville talked well, using a certain flowery style somewhat high-sounding, but full of effect. He must have repeated this story often, for he told it fluently, never hesitating for words, choosing them with skill to paint a picture:

“Gentlemen, I have never hunted, neither did my father, nor my grandfather, nor my great-grand-

father. This last was the son of a man who hunted more than all of you put together. He died in 1764. I will tell you the story of his death.

“ His name was Jean. He was married, father of that child who became my ancestor, and he lived with his younger brother, François d’Arville, in our castle in Lorraine, in the midst of the forest.

“ François d’Arville had remained a bachelor for love of the chase.

“ They both hunted from one end of the year to the other, without stopping and seemingly without fatigue. They loved only hunting, understood nothing else, talked only of that, lived only for that.

“ They had at heart that one passion, which was terrible and inexorable. It consumed them, having entirely invaded them, leaving place for no other.

“ They had given orders that they should not be interrupted in the chase for any reason whatever. My great-grandfather was born while his father was following a fox, and Jean d’Arville did not stop the chase, but exclaimed: ‘ Name of a name, that rascal there might have waited till after the view-halloo! ’

“ His brother François was still more infatuated. On rising he went to see the dogs, then the horses, then he shot little birds about the castle until the time to hunt some great beast.

“ In the countryside they were called Monsieur le Marquis and Monsieur le Cadet, the nobles then not doing at all like the chance nobility of our time, which wishes to establish an hereditary hierarchy in titles; for the son of a Marquis is no more a Count, nor the son of a Viscount a Baron, than a son of a general is a colonel by birth. But the

mean vanity of to-day finds profit in that arrangement.

“ My ancestors were immeasurably tall, bony, hairy, violent, and vigorous. The younger, still taller than the older, had a voice so strong that, according to a legend of which he was proud, all the leaves of the forests shook when he shouted.

“ When they both mounted to go off to the hunt, that must have been a superb spectacle to see, those two giants straddling their huge horses.

“ Now, toward the midwinter of that year, 1764, the frosts were excessive, and the wolves became ferocious.

“ They even attacked belated peasants, roamed at night about the houses, howled from sunset to sunrise, and robbed the stables.

“ And soon a rumor began to circulate. People talked of a colossal wolf, with gray fur, almost white, who had eaten two children, gnawed off a woman's arm, strangled all the dogs of the *garde du pays*, and even come without fear into the farmyards. The people in the houses affirmed that they had felt his breath, and that it made the flame of the lights flicker. And soon a panic ran through all the province. No one dared go out any more after nightfall. The shades seemed haunted by the image of the beast.

“ The brothers d'Arville determined to find and kill him, and several times they brought together all the gentlemen of the country to a great hunting.

“ They might beat the forests and search the coverts, they never met him. They killed wolves, but not that one. And every night after a *battue* the beast, as if to avenge himself, attacked some traveler or killed some one's cattle, always far from the place where they had looked for him.

“ Finally one night he stole into the pigpen of the Château d’Arville and ate the two fattest pigs.

“ The brothers were roused to anger, considering this attack as an insult direct and a defiance. They took their strong bloodhounds, used to pursue dangerous beasts, and they set off to hunt, their hearts heavy with fury.

“ From dawn until the hour when the empurpled sun descended behind the great naked trees, they beat the woods without finding anything.

“ At last, furious and disgusted, both were returning, walking their horses along an *allée* bordered with brambles, and they marveled that their woodcraft should be crossed so by this wolf, and they were suddenly seized with a mysterious fear.

“ The elder said:

“ ‘ That beast is not an ordinary one. You would say it had a mind like a man.’

“ The younger answered:

“ ‘ Perhaps we should have a bullet blessed by our cousin, the bishop, or pray some priest to pronounce the words which are needed.’

“ Then they were silent.

“ Jean continued:

“ ‘ Look how red the sun is. The great wolf will do some harm to-night.’

“ He had hardly finished speaking when his horse reared; that of François began to kick. A large thicket covered with dead leaves opened before them, and a mammoth beast, entirely gray, jumped up and ran off through the wood.

“ Both uttered a kind of groan of joy, and bending over the necks of their heavy horses, they threw them forward with an impulse from all their body, hurling them on at such a pace, urging them, hurrying them away, exciting them so with voice and with

gesture and with spur that the experienced riders seemed to be carrying the heavy beasts between their thighs and to bear them off as if they were flying.

“ Thus they went, bursting through the thickets, cleaving the beds of streams, climbing the hillsides, descending the gorges, and blowing on the horn with full lungs to attract their people and dogs.

“ And now, suddenly, in that mad race, my ancestor struck his forehead against an enormous branch which split his skull; and he fell dead on the ground, while his frightened horse took himself off, disappearing in the gloom which enveloped the woods.

“ The cadet of Arville stopped quick, leaped to the earth, seized his brother in his arms, and he saw that the brains ran from the wound with the blood.

“ Then he sat down beside the body, rested the head, disfigured and red, on his knees, and waited, regarding that immobile face of the elder brother. Little by little a fear possessed him, a strange fear which he had never felt before, the fear of the dark, the fear of loneliness, the fear of the deserted wood, and the fear also of the terrific wolf who had just killed his brother to avenge himself upon them both.

“ The gloom thickened; the acute cold made the trees crackle. François got up shivering, unable to remain there longer, feeling himself growing faint. Nothing was to be heard, neither the voice of the dogs nor the sound of the horns—all was silent along the invisible horizon; and this mournful silence of the frozen night had something about it terrific and strange.

“ He seized in his colossal hands the great body of Jean, straightened it, and laid it across the saddle to carry it back to the château; then he went on his

way softly, his mind troubled as if he were in a stupor, pursued by horrible and fear-giving images.

“ And abruptly, in the path which the night was invading, a great shape passed. It was the beast. A shock of terror shook the hunter; something cold, like a drop of water, glided along his veins, and, like a monk haunted of the devil, he made a great sign of the cross, dismayed at this abrupt return of the horrible prowler. But his eyes fell back upon the inert body laid before him, and suddenly, passing abruptly from fear to anger, he shook with an indescribable rage.

“ Then he spurred his horse and rushed after the wolf.

“ He followed it by the copses, the ravines, and the tall trees, traversing woods which he no longer knew, his eyes fixed on the white speck which fled before him through the night.

“ His horse also seemed animated by a force and strength hitherto unknown. It galloped, with outstretched neck, straight on, hurling against the trees, against the rocks, the head and the feet of the dead man thrown across the saddle. The limbs tore out the hair; the brow, beating the huge trunks, spattered them with blood; the spurs tore their ragged coats of bark. Suddenly the beast and the horseman issued from the forest and rushed into a valley, just as the moon appeared above the mountains. The valley here was stony, inclosed by enormous rocks.

“ François then uttered a yell of joy which the echoes repeated like a peal of thunder, and he leaped from his horse, his cutlass in his hand.

“ The beast, with bristling hair, the back arched, awaited him; its eyes glistened like two stars. But, before beginning battle, the strong hunter, seizing his brother, seated him on a rock, and, supporting

with stones his head, which was no more than a blot of blood, he shouted in the ears as if he was talking to a deaf man: 'Look, Jean; look at this!'

"Then he attacked the monster. He felt himself strong enough to overturn a mountain, to bruise stones in his hands. The beast tried to bite him, aiming for his stomach; but he had seized the fierce beast by the neck, without even using his weapon, and he strangled it gently, listening to the cessation of breathing in its throat and the beatings of its heart. He laughed, wild with joy, pressing closer and closer his formidable embrace, crying in a delirium of joy, 'Look, Jean, look!' All resistance ceased; the body of the wolf became lax. He was dead.

"Then François took him up in his arms and carried him off. Then he laid him at the feet of the elder brother, repeating, in a tender voice: 'There, there, there, my little Jean, see him!'

"Then he replaced on the saddle the two bodies, one upon the other, and he went away.

"He returned to the château, laughing and crying, like Gargantua at the birth of Pantagruel, uttering shouts of triumph and boisterous with joy in relating the death of the beast, and grieving and tearing his beard in telling that of his brother.

"And often, later, when he talked again of that day, he said, with tears in his eyes: 'If only poor Jean could have seen me strangle the beast, he would have died content, that I am sure!'

"The widow of my ancestor inspired her orphan son with that horror of the chase which has transmitted itself from father to son as far down as myself."

The Marquis d'Arville was silent. Some one asked:

"That story is a legend, isn't it? "

And the story-teller answered:

“I swear to you that it is true from beginning to end.”

Then a lady declared, in a little, soft voice:

“All the same, it is fine to have passions like that.”



THE WOODEN SHOES



THE last words of the sermon were being uttered by the old priest to his congregation of peasant women in their white caps and men with their rough or well-greased heads. The farmers' wives, who had come from a distance to attend mass, had placed their baskets on the floor beside them, and the oppressive heat of a July day caused the exhalations of their skin to resemble the odor of cattle or sheep. The crowing of cocks could be heard through the large, wide-open west door as well as the lowing of the cows in a neighboring field.

“As God wishes. Amen!” the priest said. Then he ceased, opened a book, and, as he did every week, began to give notice of all the small parish events for the following week. He was an old man with white hair who had been in the parish for over

forty years, and from the pulpit he was in the habit of discoursing familiarly to them all, and so he went on: "I recommend Désiré Vallin, who is very ill, to your prayers, and also La Paumelle, who is not recovering from her confinement satisfactorily."

He had forgotten the rest, and so he looked for the slips of paper which were put away in a breviary, and at last found two and continued: "I will not have the lads and the girls come into the churchyard in the evening, as they do; otherwise I shall inform the rural policeman. Monsieur Césaire Omont would like to find a respectable girl as servant." He reflected for a few moments and then added: "That is all, my brethren, and I wish that all of you may find the Divine mercy."

And he came down from the pulpit to finish mass.

When the Malandains had returned to their cottage, which was the last in the village of La Sablière, on the road to Fourville, the father, a thin, wrinkled old peasant, sat down at the table, while his wife took the saucepan off the fire, and Adelaide, the daughter, took the glasses and plates out of the sideboard, and he said: "I think that place at Maître Omont's ought to be a good one, as he is a widower and his daughter-in-law does not like him. He is all alone and has money. I think it would be a good thing to send Adelaide there."

His wife put the black saucepan on the table, took the lid off, and while the steam, which smelled strongly of cabbage, rose into the air, she reflected, and he presently continued: "He has got some money, that is certain, but any one going there ought to be very sharp, and Adelaide is not that at all." And his wife replied: "I might go and see, all the same," and turning to her daughter, a strap-

ping, silly-looking girl with yellow hair and fat, red cheeks like apples, she said: "Do you hear, you great silly? You are to go to Maître Omont's and offer yourself as his servant, and you will do whatever he tells you."

The girl began to laugh in a foolish manner, without replying, and then all three began their dinner. In ten minutes the father continued: "Listen to me, girl, and try not to make a mistake about what I am going to say to you." And slowly and minutely he laid down for her her line of conduct, anticipating the minutest details, and preparing her for the conquest of an old widower who was on friendly terms with his family. The mother ceased eating to listen to him, and she sat there, with her fork in her hand, looking at her husband and her daughter by turns, and following every word with concentrated and silent attention, while Adelaide remained listless, docile and stupid, with vague and wandering eyes.

As soon as their meal was over her mother made her put her cap on, and they both started off to see Monsieur Césaire Omont. He lived in a small brick house adjoining his tenants' cottages, for he had retired, and was living by subdividing and letting his land.

He was about fifty-five years old and was stout, jovial, and rough-mannered, as rich men often are. He laughed and shouted loud enough to make the walls fall down, drank brandy and cider by the glassful, and was still said to be of an amorous disposition, in spite of his age. He liked to walk about his fields with his hands behind his back, digging his wooden shoes into the fat soil, looking at the sprouting corn or the flowering colza with the eye

of an amateur at his ease, who likes to see it, but does not trouble himself about it too much any longer, and they used to say of him: "There is a Monsieur Merry-man who does not get up in a good temper every day."

He received the two women as he was finishing his coffee, sitting with his round stomach against the table, and turning round he said: "What do you want?"

The mother was spokeswoman. "This is our girl Adelaide, and I have come to ask you to take her as servant, as Monsieur le Curé told us you wanted one." Maître Omont looked at the girl, and then he said roughly: "How old is the great nanny-goat?" "Twenty last Michaelmas Day, Monsieur Omont." "That is settled; she will have fifteen francs a month and her food. I shall expect her to-morrow, to make my soup in the morning." And he dismissed the two women.

The next day Adelaide entered upon her duties, and began to work hard, without saying a word, as she was in the habit of doing at home, and at about nine o'clock, as she was scrubbing the kitchen floor, Monsieur Omont called her: "Adelaide!" She came immediately, saying: "Here I am, master."

As soon as she was opposite him, with her red and neglected hands and her troubled looks, he said: "Now just listen to me, so that there may be no mistake between us. You are my servant, but nothing else; you understand what I mean. We shall keep our shoes apart."

"Yes, master."

"Each in his own place, my girl, you in your kitchen, I in my dining-room, and with that excep-

tion, everything will be for you just as it is for me. Is that settled? ”

“ Yes, master.”

“ Very well; that is all right, and now go to your work.”

And she went out to attend to her duties, and at midday she served up her master’s dinner in the little drawing-room with the flowered paper on the walls, and then, when the soup was on the table, she went to say: “ Dinner is ready, master.”

He went in, and sat down, looked round, unfolded his table napkin, hesitated for a moment, and in a voice of thunder shouted: “ Adelaide!”

She rushed in terribly frightened, for he had shouted as if he meant to murder her.

“ Well, in Heaven’s name, where is your place? ”

“ But . . . master . . . ”

“ I do not like to eat alone,” he roared; “ you will sit there, or go to the devil, if you don’t choose to do so. Go and get your plate and glass.”

She brought them in, feeling very frightened, and stammered: “ Here I am, master,” and then sat down opposite to him, and he grew jovial; clinked glasses with her, rapped the table, and told her stories to which she listened with downcast eyes, without daring to say a word, and from time to time she got up to fetch some bread, cider, or plates. When she brought in the coffee she put only one cup before him, and then he grew angry again, and growled: “ Well, what about yourself? ”

“ I never take any, master.”

“ Why not? ”

“ Because I do not like it.”

Then he burst out afresh: “ I am not fond of

having my coffee by myself, confound it! If you will not take it here you can go to the devil. Go and get a cup, and make haste about it."

So she went and fetched a cup, sat down again, tasted the black liquor and made faces over it, but swallowed it to the last drop, under her master's furious looks. Then he made her also drink her first glass of brandy as an extra drop, the second as a livener, and the third as a kick behind; and then he told her to go and wash up her plates and dishes, adding that she was "a good sort of girl."

It was the same at dinner, and then she had to play dominoes with him, after which he sent her to bed, saying that he should come upstairs soon. She went to her room, a garret under the roof, and after saying her prayers she undressed and got into bed, but very soon she sprang up in a fright, for a furious shout had shaken the house. "Adelaide!" She opened her door and replied from her attic: "Here I am, master." "Where are you?"

"In bed, of course, master."

Then he roared out: "Will you come downstairs, in heaven's name? I do not like to sleep alone, and by G— if you object, you can just go at once."

Then in her terror she replied from upstairs: "I will come, master," as she looked for her candle, and he heard her sabots pattering down the stairs. When she had got to the bottom step he seized her by the arm, and as soon as she had left her light wooden shoes by the side of her master's heavy boots, he pushed her into his room, growling out: "Quicker than that, confound it!"

And she repeated continually, without knowing what she said: "Here I am, here I am, master."

Six months later, when she went to see her parents one Sunday, her father looked at her curiously, and then said: "Are you not *enceinte*?" She remained thunderstruck, looked at her waist, and then said: "No, I do not think so."

Then he asked her, for he wanted to know everything: "Just tell me, didn't you mix your sabots together one night?"

"Yes, I mixed them the first night, and then every other night."

"Well, then you are full, you great tub!"

On hearing that she began to sob, and stammered: "How could I know? How was I to know?"

Old Malandain looked at her knowingly and appeared very pleased, and then he asked: "What did you not know?"

Amid tears she replied: "How was I to know that children were made in that way?"

When her mother came back the man said, without any anger: "There, she is *enceinte* now."

But the mother was furious; her woman's instinct revolted, and she called her daughter, who was in tears, every name she could think of, "a trollop" and "a strumpet." Then the old man made her hold her tongue, and as he took up his cap to go and talk the matter over with Master Césaire Omont, he remarked: "She is actually more stupid than I thought she was; she did not even know what he was doing, the fool!"

On the next Sunday, after the sermon, the old curé published the banns between Monsieur Onofre-Césaire Omont and Céleste-Adelaide Malandain.



THE MADWOMAN



MONSIEUR ENDOLIN and some friends had gathered together in the smoking-room of Baron de Ravot's country house. "I can tell you a terrible story," he said, "about the Franco-Prussian war. You know my house in the Faubourg de Corneil. I was living there when the Prussians came, and had for a neighbor a kind of madwoman, who had lost her senses in consequence of a series of misfortunes. At the age of twenty-seven she had lost her father, her husband, and her new-born child, all in the space of a month.

"When death once enters a house it almost invariably returns almost immediately, as if it knew the way. The young woman, overwhelmed with grief, took to her bed, and was delirious for six weeks. Then a species of calm lassitude succeeded that violent crisis, and she remained motionless, eat-

ing next to nothing, and moving only her eyes. Every time they tried to make her get up she screamed as if they were about to kill her, and they ended by leaving her in bed and only taking her out to wash her, change her linen, and turn her mattress.



“An old servant remained with her, who gave her something to drink, or a little cold meat, from time to time. What passed in that despairing mind no one ever knew, for she did not speak at all now. Was she thinking of the dead? Was she dreaming sadly, without any precise recollection of anything that had happened? Or was her memory as stagnant as water without any

current? But, however this may have been, for fifteen years she remained thus inert and secluded.

“The war broke out, and in the beginning of December the Germans came to Cormeil. I can remember it as if it were but yesterday. It was freezing hard enough to split the stones, and I myself was lying back in an armchair, being unable to move on account of the gout, when I heard their heavy and regular tread. I could see them pass from my window.

“ They defiled past interminably, with that motion peculiar to them of puppets on wires. The officers billeted their men on the inhabitants, and I had seventeen of them. My neighbor, the crazy woman, had a dozen, one of whom was the Commandant, a violent, surly swashbuckler.

“ During the first few days everything went on as usual. The officers next door had been told that the lady was ill, and they did not trouble themselves about that in the least, but soon that woman whom they never saw irritated them. They asked what her illness was, were told that she had been in bed for fifteen years, in consequence of terrible grief. No doubt they did not believe it, and thought that the poor mad creature would not leave her bed out of pride, so that she might not come near the Prussians, not speak to them, nor even see them.

“ The Commandant insisted on her receiving him, was shown into the room, and said to her roughly: ‘ I must beg you to get up, Madame, and to come downstairs so that we may all see you,’ but she merely turned her vague eyes on him, without replying, and he continued: ‘ I do not intend to tolerate any insolence, and if you do not get up of your own accord I can easily find means to make you walk without any assistance.’

“ But she did not give any sign of having heard him, and remained quite motionless. Then he got furious, as he took that calm silence for a mark of supreme contempt, and so he added: ‘ If you do not come downstairs to-morrow . . .’ And then he left the room.

“ The next day the terrified old servant wished to dress her mistress, but the madwoman began to scream violently, and resisted with all her might.

The officer ran upstairs quickly, and the servant threw herself at his feet and cried: 'She will not come down, Monsieur, she will not. Forgive her, for she is so unhappy.'

"The soldier was embarrassed, as, in spite of his anger, he did not venture to order his soldiers to drag her out; but suddenly he began to laugh, and gave some orders in German, and soon a party of soldiers was seen coming out supporting a mattress as if they were carrying a wounded man. On that bed, which had not been unmade, the madwoman, who was now silent, was lying very quietly, for she was indifferent to anything that went on, as long as they let her lie in her bed. Behind her a soldier was carrying a parcel of feminine attire, and the officer said, rubbing his hands: 'We will just see whether you cannot dress yourself alone, and take a little walk.'

"And the procession went off in the direction of the forest of Imauville; in two hours the soldiers came back alone, and nothing more was seen of the madwoman. What had they done with her? Where had they taken her? No one knew.

"The snow was falling day and night, and enveloped the plain and the woods in a shroud of frozen foam, while the wolves came and howled at our very doors.

"The thought of that poor lost woman haunted me, and I made several applications to the Prussian authorities in order to obtain some information, and was nearly shot for doing so. When spring returned the army of occupation withdrew, but my neighbor's house remained closed, and the grass grew thick in the garden walks. The old servant

had died during the winter, and nobody troubled himself any longer about the occurrence; I alone thought about it constantly. What had they done with the woman? Had she escaped through the forest? Had somebody found her, and taken her to a hospital, without being able to obtain any information from her? Nothing happened to relieve my doubts; but by degrees time assuaged my fears.

“ In the following autumn the woodcock were very plentiful, and as my gout had left me for a time I dragged myself as far as the forest. I had already killed four or five of the long-billed birds, when I knocked over one which fell into a ditch full of branches, and I was obliged to get into it, in order to pick it up, and I found that it had fallen close to a dead human body. Immediately the recollection of the madwoman struck me like a blow in the chest. Many other people had perhaps died in the wood during that disastrous year, and I do not know why, yet I was sure, sure, I tell you, that I should see the head of that wretched maniac.

“ And suddenly I understood, I guessed everything. They had abandoned her on that mattress in the cold, deserted wood; and, faithful to her fixed idea, she had allowed herself to perish under that thick and light counterpane of snow, without moving either arms or legs.

“ Then the wolves had devoured her, and the birds had built their nests with the wool from her torn bed. I took charge of her remains, and I only pray that our sons may never see any wars again.”



PIERROT



ADAME LEFÈVRE was a country dame, a widow, one of those half peasants, half *bourgeois*, with ribbons and trimmed bonnets, a person who clipped her words and put on great airs in public, concealing the soul of a pretentious animal beneath a comical and bedizened exterior, just as the country folks hide their coarse red hands in *écru* silk gloves.

She had a servant, a simple peasant, called Rose.

The two women lived in a little house with green blinds on the highroad in Normandy, in the midst of the country of Caux. As they had a narrow strip of garden in front of the house they grew some vegetables.

One night some one stole twelve onions. As soon as Rose became aware of the theft she ran to tell Madame, who came downstairs in her woolen petticoat. It was a shame and a disgrace! They had

robbed her, Madame Lefèvre! As there were thieves in the country they might come back.

The two frightened women examined the foot-
tracks, talking, and supposing all sorts of things.

“ See, they went that way! They stepped on the wall, they jumped into the garden! ”

And they became apprehensive for the future. How could they sleep in peace now?

The news of the theft spread. The neighbors came, making examination and discussing the matter in their turn, while the two women explained to each newcomer what they had observed and their opinion.

A farmer who lived near said to them:

“ You ought to have a dog. ”

That was true! They ought to have a dog, if it were only to give the alarm. Not a big dog. Heavens! what would they do with a big dog? He would eat their heads off. But a little dog (in Normandy, they say “ *quin* ”), a little puppy that would bark.

As soon as every one had left, Madame Lefèvre discussed this idea of a dog for some time. On reflection she made a thousand objections, terrified at the idea of a bowl full of soup; for she belonged to that race of parsimonious countrywomen who always carry centimes in their pocket to give alms in public to beggars on the road and to put in the Sunday collection plate.

Rose, who loved animals, gave a favorable opinion and defended it shrewdly. So it was decided that they should have a dog, a very small dog.

They began to look for one, but could find nothing but big dogs, who would devour enough soup to make one shudder. The grocer of Rolleville had one, a tiny one, but he demanded two francs to cover

the cost of sending it. Madame Lefèvre declared that she would feed a "quin," but not buy one.

The baker, who knew all that occurred, brought in his wagon one morning a strange little yellow animal, almost without paws, with the body of a crocodile, the head of a fox, and a curly tail—a true cockade, as big as all the rest of him. Madame Lefèvre thought this common cur that cost nothing was handsome. Rose hugged it and asked its name.

"Pierrot," replied the baker.

The dog was installed in an old soap-box, and they gave it some water. They then offered it a piece of bread. He ate it. Madame Lefèvre, uneasy, had an idea.

"When he is thoroughly accustomed to the house we can let him run. He can find something to eat roaming about the country."

They let him run, in fact, which did not prevent him from being famished. Also, he never barked except to beg for food, and then he barked furiously.

Any one might come into the garden, and Pierrot would run up and fawn on each one in turn and not utter a sound.

Madame Lefèvre, however, had become accustomed to the animal. She even went so far as to like it and to give it from time to time pieces of bread soaked in the gravy on her plate.

But she had not once thought of the dog tax, and when they came to collect eight francs—eight francs, Madame!—for this puppy who never even barked, she almost fainted from the shock.

It was immediately decided that they must get rid of Pierrot. No one wanted him. Every one for ten leagues around declined to take him. Then

they resolved, not knowing what else to do, to make him *piquer du mas*.

This phrase means to eat chalk. When one wants to kill a dog he makes it *piquer du mas*.

In the midst of an immense plain one sees a kind of hut, or, rather, a very small roof standing above the ground. This is the entrance to the clay-pit. A big perpendicular hole is sunk for twenty meters underground and ends in a series of long subterranean tunnels.

Once a year they go down into the quarry at the time they fertilize the ground. The rest of the year it serves as a cemetery for condemned dogs, and as one passes this hole, plaintive howls, furious or despairing barks, and lamentable appeals reach the ear.

Sportsmen's dogs and sheepdogs flee in terror from this mournful place, and when one leans over it he inhales a disgusting odor of putrefaction.

Frightful dramas are enacted in the darkness. When an animal has suffered down there for ten or twelve days, nourished on the foul remains of his predecessors, another animal, larger and more vigorous, is thrown into the hole. There they are, alone, starving, with glittering eyes. They watch each other, follow each other, hesitate, in doubt. But hunger impels them; they attack each other, fight desperately for some time, and the stronger eats the weaker, devours him alive.

When it was decided to make Pierrot *piquer du mas*, they looked round for an executioner. The laborer who mended the road demanded six sous to take the dog there. That seemed wildly exorbitant to Madame Lefèvre. The neighbor's hired boy wanted five sous; that was still too much. So, Rose

having observed that they had better carry it there themselves, as in that way it would not be brutally treated on the way and made to suspect its fate, they resolved to go together at twilight.

They offered the dog that evening a good dish of soup with a piece of butter in it. He swallowed every morsel of it, and as he wagged his tail with delight Rose put him in her apron.

They walked quickly, like thieves, across the plain. They soon perceived the chalk-pit and walked up to it. Madame Lefèvre leaned over to hear whether any animal was moaning. No, none were there; Pierrot would be alone. Then Rose, who was crying, kissed the dog and threw him into the chalk-pit, and both leaned over, listening.

First they heard a dull sound, then the sharp, bitter, distracting cry of an animal in pain, then a succession of little mournful cries, then despairing appeals, the cries of a dog who is entreating, his head raised toward the opening of the pit.

He yelped—oh, how he yelped!

They were filled with remorse, with terror, with a wild, inexplicable fear, and ran away from the spot. As Rose went faster Madame Lefèvre cried: “Wait for me, Rose, wait for me!”

That night they were haunted by frightful nightmare.

Madame Lefèvre dreamed she was sitting down at table to eat her soup, but when she uncovered the tureen Pierrot was in it. He jumped out and bit her nose.

She awoke and thought she heard him yelping still. She listened, but she was mistaken.

She fell asleep again and found herself on a high-road, an endless road which she followed. Sud-

denly, in the middle of the road she perceived a basket, a large farmer's basket, lying there, and this basket frightened her.

She ended by opening it, and Pierrot, concealed in it, seized her hand and would not let go. She ran away in terror, with the dog hanging to the end of her arm, which he held between his teeth.

At daybreak she rose, almost beside herself, and ran to the chalk-pit.

He was yelping, yelping still; he had yelped all night. She began to sob and called him by all sorts of endearing names. He answered her with all the tender inflections of his dog's voice.

Then she wanted to see him again, promising herself that she would give him a home till he died.

She ran to the chalk-digger, whose business it was to excavate for chalk, and told him the situation. The man listened, but said nothing. When she had finished, he said:

"You want your dog? That will cost four francs." She gave a jump. All her grief was ended.

"Four francs!" she said. "You would die of it! Four francs!"

"Do you suppose I am going to bring my ropes, my windlass, and set it up and go down there with my boy and let myself be bitten, perhaps, by your cursed dog, for the pleasure of giving it back to you? You should not have thrown it down there."

She walked away, indignant. Four francs!

As soon as she entered the house she called Rose and told her of the quarryman's charges. Rose, always resigned, repeated:

"Four francs! That is a good deal of money, Madame." Then she added: "If we could throw

him something to eat, the poor dog, so he will not die of hunger."

Madame Lefèvre approved of this and was quite delighted. So they set out again with a big piece of bread and butter.

They cut it in mouthfuls, which they threw down one after another, speaking by turns to Pierrot. As soon as the dog finished one piece he yelped for the next.

They returned that evening, and the next day, and every day. But they made only one trip a day.

One morning, as they were just letting fall the first mouthful, they suddenly heard a tremendous barking in the pit. Two dogs were there. Another had been thrown in, a large dog.

"Pierrot!" cried Rose. And Pierrot yelped and yelped. Then they began to throw down some food. But each time they noticed distinctly a terrible struggle going on; then plaintive cries from Pierrot, who had been bitten by this companion, who ate up everything, as he was the stronger.

It was in vain that they specified, saying:

"That is for you, Pierrot!" Pierrot evidently got nothing.

The two women, dumfounded, looked at each other, and Madame Lefèvre said in a sour tone:

"I could not feed all the dogs they throw in there! We must give it up."

And, suffocating at the thought of all the dogs living at her expense, she went away, even carrying back what remained of the bread, which she ate as she walked along.

Rose followed her, wiping her eyes on the corner of her blue apron.



THE MINUET



ISFORTUNES do not affect me very much," said Jean Bridelle, an old bachelor who passed for a skeptic. "I have seen war at quite close quarters; I have walked across corpses without any feeling of pity. The great brutal facts of nature, or of humanity, may call forth cries of horror or indignation, but they do not cause us that tightening of the heart, that shudder that goes down your spine at sight of certain little heartrending episodes.

"The greatest sorrow that any one can experience is certainly the loss of a child, to a mother, and the loss of his mother, to a man. It is intense, terrible, it rends your heart and upsets your mind; but one is healed of these shocks, just as large, bleeding wounds become healed. Certain meetings, certain things, half perceived or surmised, certain secret sorrows, certain tricks of fate which awake in us a whole world of painful thoughts, which sud-

denly uncloset to us the mysterious door of moral suffering, complicated, incurable, all the deeper because they appear benign, all the more bitter because they are intangible, all the more tenacious because they appear almost factitious, leave in our souls a sort of trail of sadness, a taste of bitterness, a feeling of disenchantment, from which it takes a long time to free ourselves.

“ I have always present to my mind two or three things that others would surely not have noticed, but which penetrated my being like fine, sharp, incurable stings.

“ Perhaps you might not understand the emotion that I retained from these hasty impressions. I will tell you one of them. I knew a woman who was very old, but she was as lively as a young girl.

“ It may be that my imagination alone is responsible for my emotion.

“ I am fifty. I was young then, and studying law. I was rather sad, somewhat of a dreamer, full of a pessimistic philosophy, and did not care much for noisy cafés, boisterous companions, or stupid girls. I rose early, and one of my chief enjoyments was to walk alone about eight o'clock in the morning in the nursery-garden of the Luxembourg.

“ You people never knew that nursery-garden. It was like a forgotten garden of the last century, as pretty as the gentle smile of an old lady. Thick hedges divided the narrow, regular, peaceful paths, between two walls of carefully trimmed foliage. The gardener's great shears were pruning unceasingly those leafy partitions; and here and there one came across beds of flowers, lines of little trees looking like schoolboys out for a walk, companies of magnificent rose-bushes, or regiments of fruit trees.

“ An entire corner of this charming spot was inhabited by bees. Their straw hives were skilfully arranged at certain distances on boards, and had their entrances—as large as the opening of a thimble—turned toward the sun; and all along the paths one encountered these humming and gilded insects, the true masters of this peaceful spot, the real promenaders of these quiet paths.

“ I went there almost every morning. I sat down on a bench and read. Sometimes I let my book fall on my knees to dream, to listen to the life of Paris around me, and to enjoy the infinite repose of these old-fashioned hedges.

“ But I soon perceived that I was not the only one to frequent this spot as soon as the gates were opened, and I occasionally met face to face, at a turn in the path, a strange little old man.

“ He wore shoes with silver buckles, knee-breeches, a snuff-colored frock-coat, a lace *jabot*, and an outlandish gray hat, with a wide brim and a long-haired nap, that might have come out of the ark.

“ He was thin, very thin, angular, grimacing, and smiling. His bright eyes were restless beneath his eyelids, which blinked continually. He always carried in his hand a superb cane with a gold knob, which must have been some glorious souvenir.

“ This good man astonished me at first, then caused me the intensest interest. I watched him through the leafy walls, I followed him at a distance, stopping at a turn in the hedge so as not to be seen.

“ And one morning when he thought he was quite alone, he began to make the most remarkable motions. First he would give some little springs, then make a bow; then, with his slim legs, he would give

a lively spring in the air, clapping his feet as he did so, and then turn round cleverly, skipping and frisking about in a comical manner, smiling as if he had an audience, twisting his poor little puppet-like body, bowing pathetic and ridiculous little greetings into the empty air. He was dancing.

“ I stood petrified with amazement, asking myself which of us was crazy, he or I.

“ He stopped suddenly, advanced as actors do on the stage, then bowed and retreated with gracious smiles, kissing his hand like an actor, his trembling hand, to the two rows of trimmed bushes.

“ Then he continued his walk with a solemn demeanor.

“ After that I never lost sight of him, and every morning he began anew his outlandish exercises.

“ I was wildly desirous to speak to him. I decided to risk it, and one day, after greeting him, I said:

“ ‘ It is a beautiful day, Monsieur.’

“ He bowed.

“ ‘ Yes, Monsieur, the weather is just as it used to be.’

“ A week later we were friends and I knew his history. He had been a dancing-master at the Opéra, in the time of Louis XV. His beautiful cane was a present from the Comte de Clermont. And when we spoke of dancing he never stopped talking.

“ One day he said to me:

“ ‘ I married La Castris, Monsieur. I will introduce you to her if you wish it, but she does not get here till later. This garden, you see, is our delight and our life. It is all that remains of former days. It seems as if we could not exist if we did not have it. It is old and elegant, is it not? I seem to

breathe an air here that has not changed since I was young. My wife and I pass all our afternoons here, but I come in the morning because I get up early.'

"As soon as I had finished luncheon I returned to the Luxembourg, and presently perceived my friend offering his arm ceremoniously to a very old little lady dressed in black, to whom he introduced me. It was La Castris, the great dancer, beloved by princes, beloved by the King, beloved by all that century of gallantry, which seems to have left behind it in the world an atmosphere of love.

"We sat down on a bench. It was the month of May. An odor of flowers floated in the neat paths; a hot sun shot its rays between the branches and covered us with patches of light. The black dress of La Castris seemed to be saturated with sunlight.

"The garden was empty. We heard the rattling of vehicles in the distance.

" 'Tell me,' I said to the old dancer, 'what was the minuet?'

"He gave a start.

" 'The minuet, Monsieur, is the queen of dances, and the dance of queens, do you understand? Since there is no longer any royalty, there is no longer any minuet.'

"And he began in a pompous manner a long dithyrambic eulogy, which I could not understand. I wished to have the steps, the movements, the positions, explained to me. He became confused, was amazed at his inability to make me understand, became nervous and worried.

"Then, suddenly, turning to his old companion, who had remained silent and serious, he said:

“ ‘Élise, would you like—say, would you like, it would be very nice of you—would you like to show this gentleman what it was?’ ”

“ She turned her eyes uneasily in all directions, then rose without saying a word and took her position opposite him.

“ Then I witnessed an unheard-of thing.

“ They advanced and retreated with childlike grimaces, smiling, swinging each other, bowing, skipping about like two automatic dolls moved by some mechanical contrivance, somewhat damaged, but made by a clever workman according to the fashion of his time.

“ I looked at them, my heart filled with extraordinary emotions, my soul touched with an indescribable melancholy. I seemed to see before me a pathetic and comical apparition—the forgotten ghost of a former century.

“ They suddenly stopped. They had finished all the figures of the dance. For some seconds they stood opposite each other, smiling in an astonishing manner. Then they fell on each other’s neck, sobbing.

“ I left for the Provinces three days later. I never saw them again. When I returned to Paris, two years later, the nursery-garden had been destroyed. What became of them, deprived of the dear garden of former days, with its mazes, its odor of the past, and the graceful windings of its hedges?

“ Are they dead? Are they wandering among modern streets like hopeless exiles? Are they dancing—grotesque specters—a fantastic minuet in the moonlight, amid the cypresses of a cemetery, along the pathways bordered by graves?

“ Their memory haunts me, obsesses me, torments me, remains with me like a wound. Why? I do not know.

“ No doubt you think that very absurd? ”



'AT SEA'



THE following paragraphs recently appeared in the papers:

“BOULOGNE-SUR-MER, Jan. 22.—

Our correspondent writes:

“A fearful accident has thrown our seafaring population, which has suffered so much in the last two years, into the greatest consternation. The fishing-smack commanded by Captain Javel on entering the harbor was wrecked on the rocks of the harbor breakwater.

“In spite of the efforts of the life-boat and the shooting of life-lines from the shore, four sailors and the cabin-boy were lost.

“The rough weather continues. Fresh disasters are anticipated.”

Who is this Captain Javel? Is he the brother of the one-armed man?

If the poor man tossed about in the waves, and

dead, perhaps, beneath his wrecked boat, is the one I am thinking of, he took part, just eighteen years ago, in another tragedy, terrible and simple as are all these fearful tragedies of the sea.

Javel, senior, was then master of a trawling-smack.

The trawling-smack is the ideal fishing-boat. So solidly built that it fears no weather, with a round bottom, tossed about unceasingly on the waves like a cork, always on top, always thrashed by the harsh, salt winds of the English Channel, it plows the sea unweariedly with bellying sail, dragging along at its side a huge trawling-net, which scours the depths of the ocean, and detaches and gathers in all the creatures asleep in the rocks, the flat fish glued to the sand, the heavy crabs with their curved claws, and the lobsters with their pointed mustaches.

When the breeze is fresh and the sea choppy the boat begins to trawl. The net is fastened all along a big log of wood clamped with iron and is let down by two ropes on pulleys at either end of the boat. And the boat, driven by the wind and the tide, draws along this apparatus, which ransacks and plunders the depths of the sea.

Javel had on board his younger brother, four sailors, and a cabin-boy. He had set sail from Boulogne on a beautiful day to go trawling.

But presently a wind sprang up, and a hurricane obliged the smack to run to shore. She gained the English coast, but the high sea broke against the rocks and dashed on the beach, making it impossible to go into port, filling all the harbor entrances with foam and noise and danger.

The smack started off again, riding on the waves, tossed, shaken, dripping, buffeted by masses of

water, but game, in spite of everything; accustomed to this boisterous weather, which sometimes kept it roving between the two neighboring countries without its being able to make port in either.

At length the hurricane calmed down just as they were in the open; and, although the sea was still high, the Captain gave orders to cast the net.

So it was lifted overboard, and two men in the bows and two in the stern began to unwind the ropes that held it. It suddenly touched bottom, but a big wave made the boat keel, and Javel, junior, who was in the bows directing the lowering of the net, staggered, and his arm was caught in the rope, which the shock had slipped from the pulley for an instant. He made a desperate effort to raise the rope with the other hand, but the net was down and the taut rope did not give.

The man cried out in agony. They all ran to his aid. His brother left the rudder. They all seized the rope, trying to free the arm it was bruising. But in vain. "We must cut it," said a sailor, and he took from his pocket a big knife, which, with two strokes, could save young Javel's arm.

But if the rope were cut the trawling-net would be lost, and this net was worth money, a great deal of money, fifteen hundred francs. And it belonged to Javel, senior, who was tenacious of his property.

"No, do not cut; wait, I will luff," he cried, in great distress. And he ran to the helm and turned the rudder. But the boat scarcely obeyed it, being impeded by the net, which kept it from going forward, and prevented also by the force of the tide and the wind.

Javel, junior, had sunk on his knees, his teeth clenched, his eyes haggard. He did not utter a

word. His brother came back to him, in dread of the sailor's knife.

"Wait, wait!" he said. "We will let down the anchor.

They cast anchor, and then began to turn the capstan to loosen the moorings of the net. They loosened them at length and disengaged the imprisoned arm, in its bloody woolen sleeve.

Young Javel seemed like an idiot. They took off his jersey and saw a horrible sight, a mass of flesh from which the blood spurted as if from a pump. Then the young man looked at his arm and murmured: "Done for!"

Then, as the blood was making a pool on the deck of the boat, one of the sailors cried: "He will bleed to death! We must bind the vein."

So they took a cord, a thick, brown, tarry cord, and, twisting it around the arm above the wound, tightened it with all their might. The blood ceased to spurt by slow degrees and presently stopped altogether.

Young Javel rose, his arm hanging at his side. He took hold of it with the other hand, raised it, turned it over, shook it. It was all mashed, the bones broken, the muscles alone holding it together. He looked at it sadly, reflectively. Then he sat down on a folded sail, and his comrades advised him to keep wetting his arm to prevent it from mortifying.

They placed a pail of water beside him, and every few minutes he dipped a glass into it and bathed the frightful wound, letting the clear water trickle upon it.

"You would be better in the cabin," said his brother. He went down, but came up again in an hour, not caring to be alone. And, besides, he pre-

ferred the fresh air. He sat down again on his sail and began to bathe his arm.

They made a good haul. The broad fish with their white bellies lay beside him, quivering in the throes of death; he looked at them as he continued to bathe his crushed flesh.

As they were about to return to Boulogne the wind sprang up anew, and the little boat resumed its mad course, bounding and tumbling about, shaking up the poor wounded man.

Night came on. The sea ran high until dawn. As the sun rose the English coast was again visible, but, as the weather had abated a little, they turned back toward the French coast, tacking as they went.

Toward evening Javel, junior, called his comrades and showed them some black spots, all the horrible tokens of mortification in the portion of the arm below the broken bones.

The sailors examined it, giving their opinion.

“That might be the black plague,” thought one.

“He should put salt water on it,” said another.

They brought some salt water and poured it on the wound. The injured man became livid, ground his teeth, and writhed a little, but did not exclaim.

Then, as soon as the smarting had abated, he said to his brother:

“Give me your knife.”

The brother handed it to him.

“Hold my arm up, quite straight, and pull it.”

They did as he asked them.

Then he began to cut off his arm. He cut gently, carefully, severing all the tendons with this blade that was sharp as a razor. And, presently, there was only a stump left. He gave a sigh and said:

“It had to be done. It was done for.”

He seemed relieved and breathed loud. He then began again to pour water on the stump of arm that remained.

The sea was still rough, and they could not make the shore.

When the day broke, Javel, junior, took the severed portion of his arm and examined it for a long time. Gangrene had set in. His comrades also examined it and handed it from one to the other, feeling it, turning it over, and sniffing at it.

"You must throw that into the sea at once," said his brother.

But Javel, junior, not angry:

"Oh, no! Oh, no! I don't want to. It belongs to me, does it not, as it is my arm?"

And he took and placed it between his feet.

"It will putrefy, just the same," said the older brother. Then an idea came to the injured man. In order to preserve the fish when the boat was long at sea, they packed it in salt, in barrels. He asked:

"Why can I not put it in pickle?"

"Why, that's a fact," exclaimed the others.

Then they emptied one of the barrels, which was full from the haul of the last few days; and right at the bottom of the barrel they laid the detached arm. They covered it with salt, and then put back the fish one by one.

One of the sailors said by way of a joke:

"I hope we do not sell it at auction."

And every one laughed except the two Javels.

The wind was still boisterous. They tacked within sight of Boulogne until the following morning at ten o'clock. Young Javel continued to bathe his wound. From time to time he rose and walked from one end to the other of the boat.

His brother, who was at the tiller, followed him with glances, and shook his head.

At last they ran into harbor.

The doctor examined the wound and pronounced it to be in good condition. He dressed it properly and ordered the patient to rest. But Javel would not go to bed until he had got back his severed arm, and he returned at once to the dock to look for the barrel which he had marked with a cross.

It was emptied before him, and he seized the arm, which was well preserved in the pickle, had shrunk and was freshened. He wrapped it up in a towel he had brought for the purpose and took it home.

His wife and children looked for a long time at this fragment of their father, feeling the fingers, and removing the grains of salt that were under the nails. Then they sent for a carpenter to make a little coffin.

The next day the entire crew of the trawling-smack followed the funeral of the detached arm. The two brothers, side by side, led the procession; the parish beadle carried the corpse under his arm.

Javel, junior, gave up the sea. He obtained a small position on the dock, and when he subsequently talked about his accident he would say confidentially to his auditors:

“If my brother had been willing to cut away the net I should still have my arm, that is sure. But he was thinking only of his property.”



FATHER MATTHEW



WE had just left Rouen and were galloping along the road to Jumièges. The light carriage flew along across the level country. Presently the horse slackened his pace to walk up the hill of Canteleu.

One sees there one of the most magnificent views in the world. Behind us lay Rouen, the city of churches, with its Gothic belfries, sculptured like ivory trinkets; before us Saint Sever, the manufacturing suburb, whose thousands of smoking chimneys rise amid the expanse of sky, opposite the thousand sacred steeples of the old city.

On the one hand the spire of the cathedral, the highest of human monuments; on the other, the engine of the power house, its rival, and almost as high, and a meter higher than the tallest pyramid in Egypt.

Before us wound the Seine, with its scattered islands and bordered by white banks covered with a forest, on the right, and on the left immense meadows, bounded by another forest in the distance.

Here and there large ships lay at anchor along the banks of the wide river. These enormous steamboats were starting out, one behind the other, for Havre, and a chain of boats, a bark, two schooners, and a brig, were going upstream to Rouen, drawn by a little tug that emitted a cloud of black smoke.

My companion, a native of the country, did not glance at this wonderful landscape, but he smiled continually; he seemed to be amused at his thoughts. Suddenly he cried:

“Ah! you will soon see something comical: Father Matthew’s chapel. That is a sweet morsel, my boy.”

I looked at him in surprise. He continued:

“I will give you a whiff of Normandy that will stay by you. Father Matthew is the handsomest Norman in the province and his chapel is one of the wonders of the world, nothing more nor less. But I will first give you a few words of explanation.

“Father Matthew, who is also called Father La Roisson, is an old sergeant-major who has come back to his native land. He combines in admirable proportions, making a perfect whole, the humbug of the old soldier and the sly roguery of the Norman. On his return to Normandy, thanks to influence and incredible cleverness, he was made doorkeeper of a votive chapel, a chapel dedicated to the Virgin and frequented chiefly by young women who have gone astray. . . . He composed and had printed a special prayer to his “good Virgin.” This prayer is a masterpiece of unintentional irony, of Norman wit,

in which jest is blended with fear of the saint and with the superstitious fear of the secret influence of something. He has not much faith in his protectress, but he believes in her a little through prudence, and he is considerate of her through policy.

“ This is how this wonderful prayer begins:

“ ‘ Our good Madame Virgin Mary, natural protectress of girl mothers in this land and all over the world, protect your servant who erred in a moment of forgetfulness. . . .’

“ It ends thus:

“ ‘ Do not forget me, especially when you are with your holy spouse, and intercede with God the Father that He may grant me a good husband, like your own.’

“ This prayer, which was suppressed by the clergy of the district, is sold by him privately, and is said to be efficacious for those who recite it with unction.

“ In fact, he talks of the good Virgin as the valet-de-chambre of a redoubted prince might talk of his master who confided in him all his little private secrets. He knows a number of amusing anecdotes at his expense which he tells confidentially among friends as they sit over their glasses.

“ But you will see for yourself.

“ As the fees coming from the Virgin did not appear sufficient to him, he added to the main figure a little business in saints. He has them all, or nearly all. There was not room enough in the chapel, so he stored them in the woodshed and brings them forth as soon as the faithful ask for them. He carved these little wooden statues himself—they are comical in the extreme—and painted them all bright green one year when they were paint-

ing his house. You know that saints cure diseases; but each saint has his specialty, and you must not confound them or make any blunders. They are as jealous of each other as mountebanks.

“ In order that they may make no mistake the old women come and consult Matthew.

“ ‘ For diseases of the ear which saint is best? ’

“ ‘ Why, Saint Osyne is good, and Saint Pamphilus is not bad. But that is not all.’

“ As Matthew has some time to spare, he drinks; but he drinks like a professional, with conviction, so much so that he is intoxicated regularly every evening. He is drunk, but he is aware of it. He is so well aware of it that he notices each day his exact degree of intoxication. That is his chief occupation; the chapel is a secondary matter.

“ And he has invented—listen and understand—he has invented the *saoulomètre*.

“ There is no such instrument, but Matthew’s observations are as precise as those of a mathematician. You may hear him repeating incessantly: ‘ Since Monday I have had more than forty-five.’ Or ‘ I was between fifty-two and fifty-eight.’

“ Or else: ‘ I had at least sixty-six to seventy.’ Or: ‘ Hullo, cheat, I thought I was in the fifties, and here I find I have had seventy-five! ’

“ He never makes a mistake.

“ He declares that he never reached his limit, but as he acknowledges that his observations cease to be exact when he has passed ninety, one cannot depend absolutely on the truth of that statement.

“ When Matthew acknowledges that he has passed ninety, you may rest assured that he is blind drunk.

“ On these occasions his wife, Mélie, another

marvel, flies into a fury. She waits for him at the door of the house, and as he enters she roars at him:

“ ‘ So there you are, slut, hog, giggling sot! ’

“ Then Matthew, who is not laughing any longer, plants himself opposite her and says, severely:

“ ‘ Be still, Mélie; this is no time to talk; wait till to-morrow. ’

“ If she keeps on shouting at him he goes up to her and says in a shaky voice:

“ ‘ Don’t bawl any more; I have had about ninety; I am not counting any more. Look out, I am going to hit you! ’

“ Then Mélie beats a retreat.

“ If on the following day she reverts to the subject, he laughs in her face and says:

“ ‘ Come, come! We have said enough. It is past. As long as I have not reached my limit there is no harm done. But if I go past that I will allow you to correct me, my word on it! ’

We had reached the top of the hill. The road entered the delightful forest of Roumare.

Autumn, marvelous autumn, blended its gold and purple with the remaining traces of verdure. . . . We passed through Duclair; then, instead of going on to Jumièges my friend turned to the left and taking a cross cut, drove in among the trees.

And, presently, from the top of a high hill we saw again the magnificent valley of the Seine and the winding river beneath us.

At our right a very small slate-covered building with a bell tower as large as a sunshade adjoined a pretty house with green venetian blinds and all covered with honeysuckle and roses.

“ Here are some friends ! ” cried a big voice, and Matthew appeared on the threshold. He was a man about sixty, thin, and with a goatee and long white mustache.

My friend shook him by the hand and introduced me, and Matthew took us into a clean kitchen which served also as a dining-room. He said:

“ I have no elegant apartment, Monsieur. I do not like to get too far away from the food. The saucepans, you see, keep me company.” Then, turning to my friend:

“ Why did you come on Thursday? You know quite well that this is the day I consult my guardian saint. I cannot go out this afternoon.”

And, running to the door, he uttered a terrific roar: “ Mélie ! ” which must have startled the sailors in the ships along the stream in the valley below.

Mélie did not reply.

Then Matthew winked his eye knowingly.

“ She is not pleased with me, you see, because yesterday I was in the nineties.”

My friend began to laugh: “ In the nineties, Matthew! How did you manage it? ”

“ I will tell you,” said Matthew. “ Last year I found only twenty *rasières* (an old dry measure) of apricots. There are no more; but those are the only things to make cider of. So I made some, and yesterday I tapped the barrel. Talk of nectar! That was nectar; you shall tell me what you think of it. Polyte was here, and we sat down and drank a glass, and another without being satisfied (one could go on drinking it until to-morrow), and at last, with glass after glass, I felt a chill at my stomach. I said to Polyte: ‘ Supposing we drink

a glass of cognac to warm ourselves!' He agreed. But this cognac, it sets you on fire, so that we had to go back to the cider. But by going from chills to heat and heat to chills, I saw that I was in the nineties. Polyte was not far from his limit."

The door opened and Mélie appeared. At once, before bidding us good day, she cried:

"Great hog, you have both of you reached your limit!"

"Don't say that, Mélie, don't say that," said Matthew, getting angry. "I never have reached my limit."

They gave us a delicious luncheon outside beneath two lime trees, beside the little chapel, and overlooking the vast landscape. And Matthew told us, with a mixture of humor and unexpected credulity, incredible stories of miracles.

We had drunk a good deal of delicious cider, sparkling and sweet, fresh and intoxicating, which he preferred to all other drinks, and were smoking our pipes astride our chairs, when two women appeared.

They were old, dried up, and bent. After greeting us they asked for Saint Blanc. Matthew winked at us as he replied:

"I will get him for you." And he disappeared in his woodshed. He remained there fully five minutes. Then he came back with an expression of consternation. He raised his hands.

"I don't know where he is. I cannot find him. I am quite sure that I had him." Then, making a speaking trumpet of his hands, he roared once more: "Mélie-e-e!"

"What's the matter?" replied his wife from the end of the garden.

“Where’s Saint Blanc? I cannot find him in the woodshed.”

Then Mélie explained it this way:

“Was not that the one you took last week to stop up a hole in the rabbit hutch?”

Matthew gave a start.

“By thunder, that may be!” Then, turning to the women, he said:

“Follow me.”

They followed him. We did the same, almost choking with suppressed laughter.

Saint Blanc was indeed stuck into the earth like an ordinary stake, covered with mud and dirt, and forming a corner for the rabbit hutch.

As soon as they perceived him the two women fell on their knees, crossed themselves, and began to murmur an *Oremus*. But Matthew darted toward them.

“Wait,” he said; “you are in the mud. I will get you a bundle of straw.”

He went to fetch the straw and made them a *prie-Dieu*. Then, looking at his muddy saint and doubtless afraid of bringing discredit on his business, he added:

“I will clean him off a little for you.”

He took a pail of water and a brush, and began to scrub the wooden image vigorously, while the two old women kept on praying.

When he had finished, he said:

“Now he is all right,” and he took us back to the house to drink another glass.

As he was carrying the glass to his lips he stopped, and said in a rather confused manner:

“All the same, when I put Saint Blanc out with the rabbits I thought he would not make any more

money. For two years no one has asked for him. But the saints, you see, they are never out of date.”

He drank and continued:

“Come, drink another glass! With friends one should not stop at fewer than fifty, and we have not even reached thirty-eight.”.

